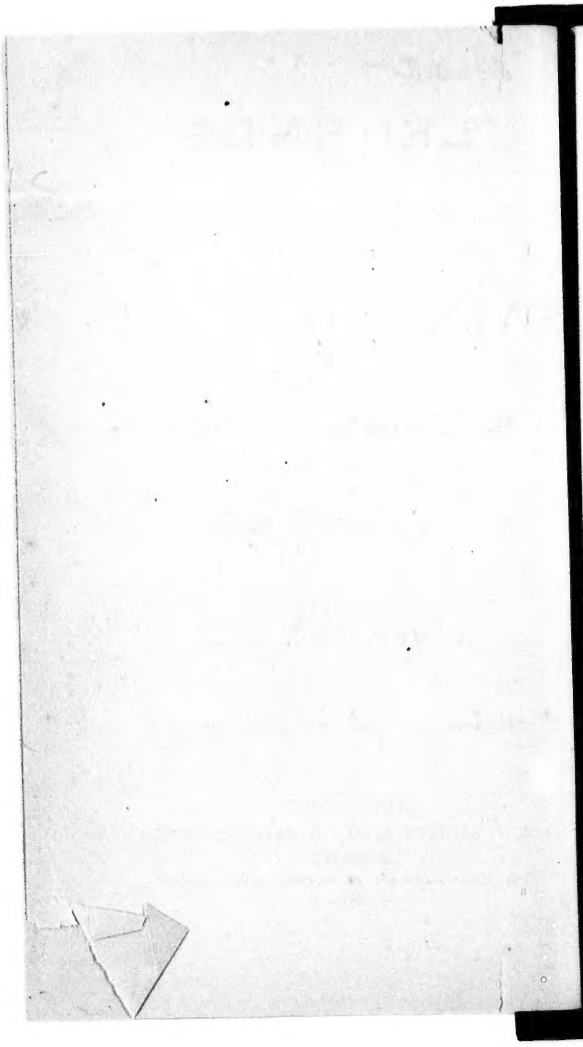

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LEGENDS

OF

SAINT JOSEPH,

Patron of the Universal Church.

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BY ABBÉ * * *

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY MRS. J. SADLIER. (Mary Anne Madden)

"The memory of the just is with praises."—*Prov.* x. 7.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE "Legends of St. Joseph," here given to the public, have been gathered by the reverend compiler from many sources. They all partake, more or less, of the legendary character, in so far as the manner of relating goes, although several are strictly and historically true, and taken from the archives of cities or religious houses. Some, like "The Rod in Blossom," "The Shepherds of Bethlehem," "The First Christmas Night," and a few others, are in strict conformity with the Scriptural narrative; while others are more or less embellished by the pious fancies of the faithful,—filling up, as it were, in process of time, the somewhat meagre details of gospel and ecclesiastical history. Some, again, are well authenticated facts of quite recent occurrence.

I have endeavored, as far as possible, to preserve throughout the simple phraseology of

the original, so well befitting popular legends. The poems I have done my best to render faithfully: no easy matter it is, as the reader will understand, to carry the versification of one language into another. In each of the poems I have retained the original measure, as being very suitable to the ballad style, and, at the same time, musical enough to please the ear.

It is with grateful satisfaction that I find myself finishing the translation, and writing this Preface, on the first Wednesday in March, the month which Christian piety sets apart for the special honor of St. Joseph; and I humbly trust that the beloved Patron of the Church, and the special protector of Christian families, will accept my share of the work as the humble offering of a heart that loves him and his Immaculate Spouse with a truly filial love, and that he will bless this little book, so that it may tend to make him known and loved by the children of the Church as the kind, good father, and faithful friend of those who seek his blessed patronage.

M. A. S.

NEW YORK, MARCH 6, 1872.

REFACE.

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M. A. S.

Approbation of the Bishop of Montreal.

We have read, with lively interest, a book entitled "Legends of St. Joseph." There are, as every one knows, family traditions perpetuated in Christian society to maintain the spirit of faith and piety, although they form no part of the sacred deposit of Catholic faith. These pious traditions are known by the name of "Legends," and our fathers, animated by the spirit of faith, took great delight in them. In that they were guided, not by the rules of severe criticism, but by the ideas generally followed in those beautiful ages when falsehood was regarded with horror, because men were deeply imbued with the truth that it

gives death to the soul; and as, in those times of innocence and simplicity, people took care not to deceive others, so they could not believe that others wished to deceive their brethren.

It is with this rule of simple good faith that the "Legends of St. Joseph" must be read, if one would find in them the sweet attraction which such reading always has. The lessons conveyed in them, under different forms, all of the most pleasing kind, make the perusal of this book useful and advantageous. From the examples given we may learn that no one ever has recourse in vain to the good St. Joseph, the worthy spouse of the immaculate Virgin, the gracious foster-father of the Son of God made man, the powerful patron of the Catholic Church.

We believe, then, that good Christians will find in the reading of these Legends wherewith to nourish their piety, their

confidence in, and their devotion to, that great Saint. Doubtless there are not wanting many other good books written in honor of this admirable Patriarch; but he is so great and so worthy of praise from the entire world, that there could never be good books enough to make him known, nor eloquent tongues enough to proclaim his greatness and his goodness. Hence it is that we hesitate not to recommend these "Legends of St. Joseph.

Given at MONTREAL, May 20th, 1871.

✠ IGNATIUS,
Bishop of Montreal.

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LEGENDS OF ST. JOSEPH.

I.

THE MORNING AND EVENING STAR.

IT is often asked why God so long delayed, not only the crowning of, but even the general diffusion of devotion to St. Joseph? Is his royalty of such recent date?

It is a universally-admitted principle, that in the Church, devotion to the Saints has its beginning, its progress, its perfection. Very different is the light of the sun at dawn and at noonday. These several degrees are always regulated by Infinite Wisdom, which "reaches from end to end mightily, and disposeth all

things sweetly." (Wisd., viii., 1.) At the outset of the preaching of the Gospel, the Virgin, as it were, veiled herself from our eyes, the better to bring out the grand figure of Christ. Is it not by a similar abnegation, an abnegation which makes the Angels wonder, that St. Joseph has remained so long in the shade? Was it not that he would have Jesus, then Mary, first take possession of all hearts, that devotion to them should be firmly established in the Church, before he advanced his own claims to our love and veneration? We cannot doubt it.

But it is unmistakably true, that Joseph, although hidden, was ever living in the Church, seen by her and felt by her children, like a faithful friend who remains unknown to us under our roof, quietly averting from us every danger, and even providing us with the means of living.

Yes, we shall unceasingly repeat, Joseph, like Mary, always lived in the Church. He always sustained her by his powerful, al-

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though secret influence. Were not the words which express all his dignity, his virtue, his merit, and his glory, inscribed in the pages of Holy Writ?—"Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus." (St. Matt. i. 16.) This Divine spouse the Holy Ghost calls *just*, by a sort of excellence and universality of justice, as the Sacred Doctors interpret it. Mary even styles him the "father" of Jesus: "Behold! Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." (St. Luke, ii. 49.) Jesus Himself recognized this supreme paternal authority: "He was subject to them." (St. Luke, ii. 50.) Hence the Fathers of the Church cannot lose sight of this divine personage: from their pen is seen going forth, here and there, the most striking testimony of his glory; they seem endeavoring to confine within due limits the enthusiasm of their love and admiration. Here and there, too, are found, amongst the ruins of ancient temples, images that prove the remembrance of Joseph. His name is stamped on all our sacred antiquities.

Joseph lived: ah! why should we suppress the fact? He lived wholly and always with Mary, in a sort of terrestrial paradise, where they had, as it were, taken up their abode. Who knows not that Mary was honored by Elias and his followers, called the children of the Prophets, on Mount Carmel, nine centuries before her appearance on earth? The mystery of a fruitful Virgin was traditional on the holy mountain; no sooner was it accomplished than Joseph had his share in the homage of Carmel. Intercourse was so easy, so frequent, so sweet, between the cottage of Nazareth and the cave of Elias and the Prophets! There it was that the Divine blossom grew. Who knows not, therefore, the blessings wherewith the Holy Scripture covers the favored mountain? Who has not remarked the celestial dews and rains wherewith Heaven watered and made ever fruitful the flower-enameled sides and miraculous summits of Carmel?

In fine, Joseph lived on earth; the ages felt

him. They saw the day of his universal honor dawning afar off, like a rising sun. Hence the appearance, at intervals, of fervent servitors, who launched on the world a species of prophecies, the accomplishment of which delights us now. And these, moreover, are but echoes of the doctrines of ages gone before.

Let us first hear Isidore of l'Isle. His voice comes to us from the sixteenth century:—

"God raised up and glorified St. Joseph for the honor of His own name, establishing him as head and patron of the Church Militant. His glory is far from being at its height. As, before the last judgment, all nations must know the name of, and venerate and adore, the only true God, so also must all admire the long-hidden, yet inestimable gifts whereof St. Joseph was the recipient. Yes, all gifts shall be granted unto him. . . . . In that favored time, the Lord will give a more subtle intelligence to the mind and the heart of His elect; they shall scrutinize the heart of St. Joseph, to admire therein the loving marvels of grace,

and they shall find an admirable treasure, such as the Patriarchs of the Old Law never either discovered or suspected. That magnificent outpouring of light and glory shall be the special work of the Holy Angels. Thus shall he who is first amongst the Saints of Heaven take, on earth, that first rank which is his due!"

A century later, Father Jacquinot, of the Company of Jesus, delighted to repeat these prophecies, making them still more clear. "Towards the end of the world," says he, "God will tear asunder the veil which conceals from us the marvels of the shrine of Joseph's holy heart; the Holy Spirit will act on the hearts of the faithful, moving them to exalt the glory of that divine personage; *religious houses shall be consecrated and temples built to him*, and people will recognize as a special protector that Saint who protected Jesus Christ; the Sovereign Pontiffs themselves shall decree, by a holy inspiration from above, that this great Patriarch be solemnly

honored throughout the whole spiritual domain of St. Peter."

Have not all these prophecies been fully accomplished in our days? Has not the devotion to St. Joseph made rapid progress? Has it not, by a secret impulse of God, assumed proportions hitherto unknown? Everywhere it is seen rewarded by favors the most precious. St. Joseph is truly the Just Man praised by God, the MAN of our time. From every country arise eloquent panegyrists who proclaim his greatness. The pages of each relate new marvels.

Our age has seen the Evening Star rising all radiant beside the Morning Star. Both are before our eyes. Both shine henceforth over the world's troubled sea. Joseph and Mary appear to us united on earth as they are in heaven. Like Mary, Joseph has his temples, his altars, his festivals. Like her, he has his religious congregations, devoted to him. The year sets apart a month for him, the week a day. In honor of Joseph, as in

honor of Mary, are erected Archconfraternities, Associations, and Congregations, not to speak of the holy families whose father he is. It is deemed an honor to wear his livery. His Cord has become the charming appendage of the Scapular.

And why should he not share in all the honors paid to his divine Spouse? Are not their goods in common, and by reason of their virtues? Was there not a day to come, O Joseph, when it should be given thee to share with Mary the only glory of which thou didst seem to be deprived? The crown of thy Spouse was to be, as it were, doubled, without taking any thing from its splendor, and to rest on thee? That happiness we owe to the illustrious Pius IX. May Heaven reward him for evermore!

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II.

VILLE MARIE (NOW MONTREAL); OR, THE MARVELOUS FOUNDATION.

IN the first years of the sixteenth century there lived in Paris, in St. Paul's parish, a man who was to signalize his passage on earth as much by his lofty virtues as by works of zeal and charity; his name was Jean Olier. His father was a member of the State Council, and became Superintendent of Lyons under Louis XIII. The name which the young Olier bore, the high rank of his family, his rare qualities, his talents, his connection with the most distinguished men of his time, early attracted public attention; he had the signal honor of being blessed by the saintly Bishop of Geneva, of having for director St. Vincent de Paul, and

also Father de Condreu, Superior of the Oratory. But one thing more remains to be added; he was the founder of the Company of St. Sulpice. Such was the man who was to establish in Canada the devotion to the Holy Family.

There lived, at the same time, in Anjou, a gentleman named Jerome le Royer de la Dauversière, collector of taxes at La Flèche. He was a man of great piety, of rare abnegation, and the father of six children. God had made known to him that He wished to be particularly honored in the island of Montreal, by the veneration of the Holy Family, and that He chose him to make the person of St. Joseph honored. To this intent He had several times ordered him to establish in that island, as yet barren and uncultivated, a hospital, designed for the relief and instruction of the sick, and to form, for the management of this house, a Congregation of Hospital Nuns, specially devoted to the honor of that great Saint.

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An order so extraordinary had thrown M. de la Dauversière into the strangest perplexity. He did not understand how, in his position, he could undertake the foundation of a colony in America, and the establishment of a new congregation of women devoted to the service of St. Joseph. The island of Montreal he knew not even by name. Nor did his pecuniary means warrant him in undertaking works so important. He had not even that facility of speech which presents enterprises in the most favorable light, and persuades people to embark in them. Nevertheless, the same orders were so often renewed, in a manner so urgent, with instructions so clear and so precise concerning the situation of Montreal and Canada, the quality and character of the persons who were to aid in executing this design, that at length the confessor of M. de la Dauversière, after having for a long time treated the project as wild and impracticable, thought that he ought to let him go to Paris, to see if Providence would present him with

any opportunity of carrying out this so extraordinary enterprise.

Arrived in the capital, M. de la Dauversière went to present himself to the minister, the Keeper of the Crown Seals, who resided at Meudon, and in the gallery of the castle met Mr. Olier. These two men were not acquainted, had never seen each other, and had never had the slightest intercourse one with the other. Impelled by a Divine inspiration, they meet like two friends who had been long separated, and embrace one another with the warmest affection, as though their hearts were one; they salute each other by name, as we read of St. Dominick and St. Francis of Assissium. Mr. Olier congratulates M. de la Dauversière on the cause of his journey, and placing in his hands a roll of one hundred pounds in gold [about five hundred dollars], he said: "Sir, I want to have a share in the work; I know your intention, and am going to recommend it to God." Next day, Mr. Olier celebrated the Holy

Mass, at which M. de la Dauversière received communion. After the thanksgiving both retired to the park of the castle, and communicated to each other the plans they had formed to promote the glory of God in the island of Montreal. Their conversation lasted three hours. It was clearly ascertained that both had received the same lights, the same orders, and proposed the same means to be taken for insuring success. Mr. Olier formed a company of persons of great piety, known by the name of the Company of Our Lady of Montreal, most of them very wealthy, all called by God to contribute, by their prayers or their donations, to the success of the work. Some time after he assembled all the members, and introduced M. de la Dauversière, who stated, with his wonted simplicity, the communications and orders he had received from God concerning this new settlement. How hazardous soever such an enterprise might appear, the words of M. de la Dauversière, although simple and un-

studied, found an echo in those hearts so well disposed.* All were fully convinced of his mission, and readily opened their purses, deeming themselves happy in being chosen to contribute to the execution of a design so advantageous for the glory of God and the good of His Church.

The first steps they took was to secure the island of Montreal. M. de Lauson, who had received it from the great Canada Company, made it over to them on easy terms, renouncing his first intentions, and making a sacrifice of his personal interests. The royal authority failed not soon to ratify this transfer; so that the action of Providence was made manifest, contrary to all human foresight.

In receiving the ownership and dominion of the island, the Associates pledged themselves to found a colony therein, and to establish three communities: First, a seminary of ecclesiastics, ten or twelve in number, destined for the ministry of the altar,

the preaching of the Holy Gospel, the work of converting the savage aborigines of the island, and to keep a school for boys; second, a community of religious teachers for the education of girls; and, third, a hospital for the service of the sick. By means of these measures, say they in their Act of agreement, the Associates hope, through the goodness of God, to see, in a little time, a new church, which shall imitate the purity and charity of the primitive Church. They furthermore hope that in after years they and their successors may be able to spread abroad over the country, to erect new dwellings, as much to contribute to public convenience as to facilitate the conversion of the savages.

The three communities here mentioned bound themselves to honor Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, each one to partake of the spirit of their august patrons, to imbue therewith this new Church. From that time the formal intention of the Associates was to con-

fide the direction of the future Hospital to the religious whom M. de la Dauversière would establish in honor of St. Joseph; the management of the Seminary to Mr. Olier, who began, shortly after, the foundation of the Company so well known in France under the name of St. Sulpice; and, finally, they hoped to give in charge the community of teachers to the person whom Providence might have chosen for that purpose. This was Sister Bourgeoys, specially destined to make the Blessed Virgin Mary honored in the colony of Montreal. She was the foundress, in Canada, of the Congregation of Our Lady of Montreal.

Who does not admire the action of Providence in the creation of these various establishments?

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III.

THE ROD IN BLOSSOM.

AROUND the sacred ark the sons of Juda stand,
Sending to Heaven above their humble, fervent prayer;
What hath brought unto the temple the young men of the land,
And wherefore in each hand a wither'd branch and bare?

But yester eve, with joyous, hopeful heart,
They laid upon the altar each dry and mystic rod;
And sadly now they gaze, and their fondest hopes depart—
The branches still are leafless, no change hath come from God!

Behold them once again praying the Lord Most High;
But one, before unseen, has join'd their band—

One in whose calm and brightly-beaming eye
Are imaged virtues heroic and grand.

Lofty is his brow, majestic and serene;
He, too, doth in his hand a dry branch bear,
Seeming the while amazed that he hath been
Call'd to contest a prize so passing rare.

Humble he is, although of lineage high,
Deeming himself, of all, the least and last,
And matchless pure in heart, wherefore th' all-seeing Eye
Hath been on him with special favor cast.

"Joseph, draw near!" from God the high-priest speaks,
And Joseph, in his turn, lays down his rod.
Oh, wondrous prodigy! full soon it breaks
Forth into leaves and flow'rs—all praise to God!

O Joseph, son of David! hail, all hail!
Thou art the favor'd one, the Virgin thine—
The Virgin whose bright name shall never pale,
Who crushes Satan's head with power divine!

Thine is that lily fair, that spotless dove,
That fragrant flower that bloom'd for Eden's bow'rs,
The Lord hath chosen thee, with special love,
To guard His fairest one of all earth's flow'rs!

Favor'd art thou, and lo! thy destined bride,
Bright as the stars and more than heavenly pure,
Comes forth, the Lord with her, and at thy side
Receives the ring that makes the compact sure.

Hail then, chaste spouse of Mary, hail, thrice hail!
For Heaven, in giving her a spouse like thee,
So pure, so God-like, surely will not fail
To make thee our Protector, too, to be!

IV.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

IN the year of the world 4004, on the 24th of December, an old man and a young woman were journeying towards the city of Bethlehem, in Judea. The young woman, beautiful beyond conception, and inspiring virtue by her chaste and modest look, was seated on the back of an ass which the old man led by the bridle. This old man, whose mien was at once mild and venerable, turned often to see whether his young companion wanted anything, trying, at the same time, to lead the animal over the smoothest ground, so as to avoid any shock.

"I much fear," said he, urging the beast to quicken its pace; "I much fear that we shall reach Bethlehem too late to procure lodging for the night. For me, it is of small

account; but for thee, who hast so much need of rest!"

"Have confidence, father!" said the young woman in a tone of meek resignation, "God will provide for us." And the old man, to whom these simple words seemed to give new strength, went on his way praying.

And the shades of evening were falling on the earth; and the moon was already shining in mild radiance in the firmament above, as though to invite the poor pilgrims to rest, when they reached the gates of the city.

* * * * *

All denoted one of those clear, cold winter nights which are so much the harder on people in the East, because they are less accustomed to them. What the old man had foreseen came to pass. The inns were full of travellers, brought thither for enrollment by an edict of Cæsar Augustus. Nowhere was there place for the last arrivals.

Knock at what door he would, how touching soever his prayers and supplications, he

found himself, hours after, sad and dejected, still on the road he had so often traversed, seeking shelter, at least for his companion.

* * * * *

And seeing nothing, the old man lamented. And his young companion, as it were, indifferent to all the rebuffs and refusals they had met, with the Psalmist, raised her eyes and her heart to the holy mountains.

All at once she said: "Father, be not discouraged; the people whose hardness of heart so afflicts you, know us not. . . . I alone am the cause of what has happened, since it is for me, and the child I bear in my womb, that you tarried by the way. . . . Listen, now, to what I am about to say. But a little way from here I remarked, on our first entering into the city, a deserted stable; that may be the shelter to which Providence calls us; let us go thither." The old man wiping away a tear, still hesitated. "God wills it so, my father," she meekly added.

* * * * *

The stable to which they retired was roughly hewn out of the rock, and had been long deserted. That night two animals, an ox and an ass, were sheltered there, brought from a neighboring inn because of the throng in the city. To this fortunate circumstance the old man and his companion were indebted for some fresh straw which they found in the cave.

* * * * *

The moonbeams, penetrating through the jagged cliffs at the entrance, partially lit up the interior of the grotto. Whilst the old man, mindful of the wants of his youthful spouse, prepared a couch for her, she fell on her knees, and prayed so silently and with so little outward motion, that it seemed as though her soul, taking a heavenward flight, had left there only a mortal covering.

* * * * *

But when she had prayed, the young woman proceeded to unfold some clothes of a coarse texture, but exquisitely clean, which

she had brought with her, and which, with sweet forethought, she had placed in her bosom to keep them warm.

The old man looked on with respectful attention. "Is the happy moment, then, come?" said he at length. "What! in this lonely stable! in the company of these animals?"

"Canst thou wonder?" replied the young wife. "Ah! what is this new abasement for the *Word made Flesh*, since He has deigned to come down and rest in my womb! Oh, incomprehensible mystery of the love of the Creator for the creature! To dwell with men, God himself did not disdain to clothe Himself with human nature, and it is in poverty He chooses to be born, because He comes to ennoble, to save, to elevate the poor!"

At these words the old man became more collected. "And then, Mary, dost thou not suffer?"

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I suffer! Never has

the fruit of benediction conceived in my womb, the mysterious work of the Divine Spirit, caused me the least pain. Doubtless He smiles at this moment, so long desired, when His holy humanity is going, by its first sufferings, to begin the work of Redemption."

"Oh, yes!" she added, rising, "He inflames my heart; I am already inundated with the purest delight; I no longer live, it is Jesus who liveth in me! He is mine, I am His. A sweet ecstasy takes possession of my being. My heart no longer feels its human life. Kneel! the prodigy is being wrought; I am the Mother of my God!"

* * * * *

While she spoke thus a strong and dazzling light filled the stable of Bethlehem. And the Virgin of Isaiah disappeared for a moment from mortal sight.

Joseph, humbly prostrate, adored in silence.

* * * * *

The night had reached the middle of its course; the moment of majestic silence in nature, the solemn and ever mysterious hour marked out by the Prophets for the birth of the promised Deliverer.

* * * * *

And the light gradually faded.

And Joseph, in expectation of the great prodigy, his heart inflamed with all the ardor of the desires of the Patriarchs and Prophets, raised his eyes. . . .

And the Virgin Mother appeared in a resplendent cloud, surrounded by Angels, holding out to him the fairest Child that earth had ever seen, the First-Born amongst men, the Saviour of the world, the Prince of Peace, the Mighty God—a little Babe!

His heart glowed with faith and love. And as he bowed down to adore, and contemplate, in his turn, mute with awe and admiration, the Child held out His hands so graciously to him that he was attracted towards Him, as it were, in spite of himself;

and bending lovingly down, received in his arms Him whose glory the heavens proclaim, and whom the whole universe cannot contain!

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And when he had wholly satiated himself by sight and by touch, clasping the Babe delightedly in his arms, Joseph placed Jesus again in his Mother's arms.

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And the cloud vanished. And the Angels disappeared. And the Child's abode resumed its former aspect. Then was heard a low moaning cry. It was Jesus, whose immaculate flesh began to feel the cold; it was Jesus beginning His Saviour-life.

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Then the Virgin wrapped the Child in swaddling-clothes, and when Joseph had finished preparing the crib, weeping, they laid Him in it.

And Jesus still cried. An Angel descended from heaven, bearing a cup, which he put

to the lips of the Child, murmuring the name of Gethsemane.

And the Virgin shuddered. . . .

Then the Angel disappeared, brushing with his wing, as he passed, the sleeping animals.

And the shepherds, coming to the stable directed by the Angels, saw the Child, warmed by the breath of the ox and the ass, who were already submissive to the caresses of Mary and Joseph.

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V.

DUTY BEFORE ALL.

AFTER great reverses of fortune and long years of tribulation, borne with true maternal courage, Madame C——— had seen her misfortunes crowned by the loss of two fair and promising children, and, finally, that of her husband, who, in a little time, followed them to the grave.

The sorrows and privations which had ruined the father's health snatched him away just when he was on the point of obtaining a situation that would have enabled him to keep his family at least above want. In losing him, his widow had not only to lament a dear and constant friend, a faithful companion, but also the principal support of her family.

This family, consisting still of four children, had thenceforth no other support than two young sons, the eldest of whom had just reached his twentieth year. The remuneration they received for their work was so small that it promised but little relief to the family, and, notwithstanding all their devotedness, they could not do much to assist their mother, especially as their father had left some debts. To satisfy the creditors, some of whom were very pressing, and provide the necessaries of life for her children, so as to keep them from sinking like their father, were very difficult tasks for the poor widow. She had vainly endeavored to procure employment for herself; and her health, shattered by this long train of misfortunes, scarcely enabled her to work, even if she had it to do.

The eldest of her daughters was just sixteen; she was strong, well formed, discreet, modest, and amiable. The indigent circumstances of the family had prevented her

from receiving a complete education; parents and friends had, by turns, lent a hand, but still her education was very deficient.

The same circumstances which had prevented Helen from learning much at school had made her a good housekeeper, the most necessary of all qualities in a woman. Only, there was little use in her knowing how to cook, if there was nothing to be cooked, unless it might be stone soup, the story of which I shall not tell my readers, supposing they have all heard of it.

The friends of the family who took an interest in Helen urged her mother to have her learn some trade; but it was not so easy to find an opportunity of doing so without exposing the innocence of the young girl, who had never been away from her mother. When such an opportunity was at length found, the conditions were such that it was beyond the reach of Helen's mother and her friends. The girl's want of instruction put teaching, the most honorable of all careers,

out of the question, and, on the other hand, apprenticeship to any trade was open to many objections. Some respectable women offered to teach Helen their own business, some flower-making, others dress-making, others plain sewing; but none of them could lodge her, and they lived so far away that the young apprentice would have had to go through all Paris morning and evening. Moreover, when a fee could not be paid, Helen would have had to work several years without any pay, which did not suit a poor family that stood in urgent need of some immediate assistance.

In this indescribable embarrassment, the poor mother conceived the happy thought of having recourse to St. Joseph, the patron of and provider for families. Troubled as she was, she did not even think of making a Novena to him; but she *two* or *three times* addressed him in earnest supplication, going from the heart—and the hoped-for aid was not long in coming. A good situation in a

respectable mercantile house was unexpectedly offered to her daughter, with eight hundred francs a year, and board besides, in a locality not far from her mother's house, so that she was able to go home in the evening, and had, moreover, Sundays and holy days to herself.

This unhoped-for position, for so young a person, was accepted, as may be supposed, with great joy, although not without anxiety; for was it certain that Helen would be able to discharge duties that required practice and experience? But does St. Joseph ever leave his work unfinished? The timid girl displayed in her new and strange position a steadiness and ability that could scarcely be expected. She made herself equally esteemed by her employers, beloved by her companions, and respected by the clerks employed in the house.

It would have been almost too much if this auspicious beginning had not been stamped with the seal of trial. Helen had to inaugu-

rate her new position by a little sacrifice. The mother of her chief employer, a woman of austere piety, accustomed to see around her only persons of mature age, thought it her duty to object to Helen's way of arranging her hair. Although very plain and simple in Helen's case, yet being in accordance with the prevailing style, it jarred on the habits and notions of the worthy matron, who insisted on a change. Those of my readers who have long renounced the world may not appreciate the full value of the sacrifice required of her; but if any young girl should read this, or any one who remembers having been young, they will admit that the self-forgetfulness which consists in adopting through obedience a fashion that is out of date, or any way ridiculous, is one of the most painful sacrifices that can be imposed on a woman who has not bid adieu to the illusions of life.

Would you have done it, dear Julia, you who know so well how to arrange your fair

tresses in the way most becoming to your fresh, blooming face? Would you have done it at sixteen, Emily, you whose brow has now no other ornament than the white band of the religious?

Amongst the gay companions with whom Helen went on Sunday, more than one said to Helen: "It is not I that would consent to be drilled after that fashion. I would rather give up the situation than make myself so dowdy as you do!" We will not take upon us to say that Helen did not say something of the kind to herself, but the sense of duty very soon regained the mastery, and God and St. Joseph helping, she was able to resist these tempting suggestions and submit to make the required sacrifice.

Let us add that she looked none the worse for it. Is not virginal modesty the fairest ornament? Adorned, especially, with an excellent reputation, Helen made herself so remarkable by her faithful discharge of her duty, and her general conduct, that the rela-

tives and friends, long prejudiced against her, began to see their error and make advances towards the renewal of friendly relations, which was very agreeable and even advantageous to the family, and surely very honorable to the young girl, who had succeeded in overcoming unjust prejudices and reviving a well-merited interest in her and hers.

This little story being true, is simple. Had it been fiction, it would, doubtless, have been more embellished with incidents. May it excite increased confidence in that revered patronage under which every family ought to take shelter.

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VI.

THE VALUE OF A MASS.

BEFORE going to seek employment for the day, a poor working-man named Joseph Wilhelm, went regularly to say his prayers and hear Mass in the neighboring church. One morning he rose earlier than usual, and, contrary to his pious custom, went to look for work without performing his devotions.

He soon found that, with reasonable exertion on his own part, it was better to count on a fatherly Providence than on mere human prudence. Like himself, a crowd of men of all trades were there waiting for employment; but no one came to offer them work. "What is to be done?" said he to himself. His heart, in accordance with his faith, dictated the answer. He went to church, said

his prayers, and heard a Mass. He did not feel the time passing, while kneeling before the Tabernacle, and when he returned to the square, the men, and those who had come to hire them, were all gone.

Sad and dejected, Joseph Wilhelm was slowly returning to his humble dwelling, when he perceived coming towards him, with a frank, good-natured mien, a well-known employer of working-people, Master Barnaby Zimmerman.

This wealthy personage was not precisely what is called an irreligious man; but he had, on more than one point, and especially on the law of Sunday's rest and the obligation of hearing Mass on that day, notions that were not altogether orthodox. He had even been known to say, without much appearance of shame, that he had neglected his Easter duty that year, and also, I believe, the year previous. This did not prevent him, like many others of his kind, from bearing the title of an honest man, and

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A few words from Joseph made the worthy burgher understand the cause of his dejection.

"I have no work to give you, my good man," said he. "I have all the men I want just at present. But where were you while the other men were waiting for work?"

"I was at Mass."

"At Mass! at Mass! It is, doubtless, very good to go to Mass. I don't deny but I like that; but, nevertheless, my man, people must live; and in order to live, one must work, when one hasn't the means of living without it."

"But, master, I work every day, all the year round, except Sundays and holy days, only to-day ——"

"Very good! You love the church and the Mass, I see that. Well, since you have nothing to do, for want of better employment, go to church; hear Mass, and pray

for me during the time you would have been at work; and when evening comes, I will pay you the usual price for your day's work. What do you think of that?"

"I accept your offer, with gratitude," answered Wilhelm, with a low bow. And off he went to the church, where he faithfully fulfilled his engagement.

Evening being come, Joseph betook himself to the burgher's house, where he duly received twelve sous, the usual pay for a days work, and also a loaf of bread.

Wilhelm, well pleased, was retracing his homeward way, praying as he went, when he met an old man of noble and majestic mien, who seemed well acquainted with all the incidents of the day. "Go back," said he, in a grave, commanding voice, "and tell that man that he has not given you all he owes you; and that if he does not add something more to what he has given you, it will be worse for him."

The workman did not dare to make any

objection, and delivered the authoritative message, not without great embarrassment.

A slight shiver ran, at first, through the rich man's members. But he speedily recovered himself, thinking it was, perhaps, a stratagem of the pious workman, in order to make him open his purse-strings. "Ah ha! my good friend," said he, good humoredly, "the appetite grows with eating, I perceive. Did I not give you what I give all my laborers, twelve good sous and a loaf of bread? If you keep on in that way, you'll do a thriving business." Then, stopping short, he muttered to himself: "It may be all right. He ought to know the value of Masses and prayers better than I do."

And he counted him out five sous.

Poor Wilhelm was possessed of both feeling and intelligence, and he understood, with sorrow, that what he did, solely through obedience, was attributed to motives diametrically opposed to his sentiments. His first impulse,—and a very natural one, too,—was

to give back to Master Barnaby the twelve sous he had given him, with the five over and above. But he feared that by giving way to this natural feeling, he would make the worthy burgher angry, and sin himself against the virtues of charity and humility. So he went away.

But, behold! he had only gone a few paces when he came full upon the same old man. He was just going to ease his heart by telling him of his trouble; but without leaving him time to open his mouth: "Go," said the mysterious personage again, "tell that man that he has not given you all he owes you, and that some misfortune will befall him if he does not give you more pay."

The perplexity of the honest laborer may be easier imagined than described. "If I do as the old man bids me," said he to himself, "I offend the honorable Zimmermann, who, after all, was very good to me this morning, and has given me more than we agreed upon. If, on the other hand, I refuse ——"

His internal colloquy was cut short by an imperative look from the unknown, and Wilhelm had to resign himself to go back again with the strange message. This time, the burgher was struck with indefinable terror. He ran to his money-chest, hastily thrust in both his hands, and drew them out full of coin, which he gave, without counting them, to the surprised and grateful laborer.

That very night, Christ Jesus appeared to Master Barnaby Zimmermann. He was seated on his tribunal: His face was expressive of majestic and ineffable serenity. He enumerated the faults of the honorable and worthy burgher; He reproached him with them in terms that made his blood run cold to hear. Then continuing: "Know," said he, "that if that poor man whom you humbled had not heard Mass to your intention, it would have been all over with you. Sudden death would have overtaken you: you were damned forever. See, now, if you have given him all you owe him."

So saying, he disappeared.

When our burgher awoke, he was no longer the careless and somewhat skeptical philosopher of the day before; he was covered with sweat, and as pale as death. From that moment, he ceased to consider prayer as a makeshift; and, above all, understood better the value of a Mass.

How many others, unknown to themselves, were indebted to the Mass for the success of their material enterprises in this life, and in the other, an eternity of bliss!

We thought this story naturally found its place in the "Legends of St. Joseph." Who, indeed, could the mysterious old man here in question be, if not the august Financier to whom it has been given to appraise the spiritual and temporal goods whereof God has made him the dispenser,—the special patron, and, consequently, the regulator of the interests of the working class; and, finally, the particular patron of the worthy Joseph Wilhelm?

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VII.

THE UNEXPECTED PILOT.

THERE is no practice more pleasing to St. Joseph than the commemoration of his seven joys and seven sorrows; there is no surer means of obtaining his assistance. This pious devotion derives its origin from a well-known occurrence related by all the authors who have written on St. Joseph. It is as follows:—

Two religious of the Order of St. Francis were sailing on the Sea of Flanders; all at once there arose a tempest so furious that the vessel was swallowed up, with all on board; that is to say, more than three hundred persons. The two monks were so fortunate as to get hold of a fragment of the

wreck, to which they clung. They were for three days and three nights exposed to the fury of winds and waves. What a fearful situation! Their strength began to fail, and becoming gradually more exhausted, they could, at last, scarcely keep their hold on the plank of safety. At this moment they began to invoke St. Joseph, for whom they had always had a particular devotion. On the third day, St. Joseph appears to them under the form of a strong, majestic man. He deigns to take his place between them, and to unite his efforts with theirs, while sharing, as it were, their danger; he graciously salutes them, and that v / salute seems to revive their failing coura nd give them new strength. Very soon he .kes the direction of their singular craft, and brings them safe and sound to shore. The good religious first thank Heaven for having saved them, then turning to the unknown, they beg of him to tell them his name. "I am Joseph," he replied. "I am he whose heart

was overwhelmed with seven joys, and torn by seven swords of sorrow. My protection is sure to all those who shall make a remembrance of them on earth. Profit by this advice, and make others do so, likewise.

He then disappeared, leaving the monks full of joy and gratitude.

VIII.

THE LIGHTING OF NAPLES.

THERE lived in Naples, a very long time ago, a good monk who, by his charity and indefatigable devotion to all, had acquired such an influence over the populace, that a word from him was sufficient to make them do whatever he wished. On account of his small stature, the *Lazzaroni* called him nothing but "the little Father:" he was for them at once preacher, physician, and magistrate, and day and night they found him always ready to serve them. Hence, he had become a real power in the city.

Now, at that time, the city of Naples did not yet enjoy the advantage of having its streets lit by night, and vicious people of all sorts turned the darkness to good account

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against the honest and well-disposed amongst the people. In order to remedy this state of things, the city council, by order of the Government, decided that the three principal streets of the city, Toledo, Chiaia, and Foria, should be henceforth lighted. Some sixty lamps were accordingly prepared for the streets named, to the great contentment of all honest people, who rejoiced in being no longer exposed to the dangers of former days. But they counted without the *Lazzaroni*.

In fact, those gentry, the sworn enemies of all that interfered with their habits, could not peaceably see themselves deprived of their old facility in robbing, and even of their peculiar way of sleeping; it was touching them on the sore spot. So, waxing furious, they broke, in one night, all the lamps. The magistrates, unwilling to give way to the rioters, soon had the lamps replaced by others, with the threat of imprisonment for whoever dared to injure them. But it was talking to the deaf, and notwithstanding all

the precautions taken, the second luminaries shared the fate of the first. A third attempt succeeded no better. The poor Neapolitan functionaries, seeing themselves thus defeated, were on the point of giving up the undertaking, when a bright idea came into the head of one of the members of the council. "If the little Father would only come to our aid," said he, "the victory would certainly be ours." "That is true," said all the others; "we want the little Father's help." Two members of the council were forthwith deputed to go and request him to come and talk the matter over with them. The good Father accepts the invitation, listens to all that is said, reflects a moment, and tells them that he hopes to get them out of their difficulty, and insure the success of their enterprise, provided they let him act with perfect freedom. They readily promise to do so, and separate full of hope and joy.

Without delay the little Father, who had quickly formed his plan, set about putting it

in execution. He goes immediately in search of two or three painters, the poorest and least employed; he conducts them to St. Joseph street, which opens, at one end, on Toledo street, and at the other on Medina square; he stops with them before a high wall, orders them to whiten it carefully, and then to paint on it at full length a handsome picture of St. Joseph.

The *Lazzaroni*, who had no suspicion of the innocent snare laid for them, and who, moreover, are artists by nature, stopped first from curiosity, and afterwards with interest, to look at the painting the little Father was having done, the more so that the picture was quite a good one.

When all was finished, the little Father placed a lamp before St. Joseph's image. The Lazzaroni only concluded that the good Father had a special devotion to St. Joseph, and as the lamp did not throw much light around no one minded its being there. The following evening, the Father added a second

lamp to the first, seeing which the Lazzaroni began to show some discontent, because it was a novelty to have so much light in a street that had hitherto been so dark. The third day, at the same hour, the little Father arrives with three lamps, which he arranges before the image. Then the Lazzaroni, more numerous than on the previous days, lost all patience, and began to complain loudly. But the Father, appearing to take no notice of their complaints, returned a fourth time, and it was to fasten a bright lamp to the wall.

From this step the Lazzaroni clearly saw that his intention was to support the action of the authorities against the mutineers, and take sides with honest people against robbers; in a word, that he wanted the city to be lit. Thereupon, popular indignation reached its height, the lamp was broken, and the whole angry mob began to shout: "Death to St. Joseph! death to all the enemies of the *Lazzaroni!*"

The little Father waited, with much com-

posure, till the storm had passed, certain that no one would dare to touch even a hair of his head.

When the tumult had subsided a little, he asked to be heard for a moment, and very far from reproaching them or making any complaints, as he had a right to do, he contented himself with announcing that on the following day he would preach in one of the public squares, on the greatness and power of St. Joseph.

At this announcement, curiosity and joy were all the more lively, that the Father rarely spoke in the open air, and only on great occasions or great public emergencies; hence the announcement was well received, and every one went away peaceably in expectation of the morrow.

From the dawn of day, not only the place appointed, but all the adjacent streets, were densely crowded; for the whole population of the city having heard the news, had eagerly thronged to hear the sermon.

Very soon the little Father appears, and is welcomed with loud acclamation, followed immediately by a respectful silence as soon as he ascends the platform from which he is to speak.

The zealous preacher spoke to the hearts of that believing people so touchingly and so efficaciously, that when he had finished his discourse, and, with a persuasive smile, put this question to them: "Well, children, now that you know the excellence and the merits of St. Joseph, tell me if one poor taper would suffice to express our veneration for so glorious a protector: tell me if you were right in being angry with me, because I wished to honor him with a bright lamp?" the whole crowd, as it were, electrified, cried with one voice:

"What! one lamp! He deserves ten! he deserves twenty! a hundred! . . . St. Joseph, the guardian of Jesus, for ever! . . . Long live the little Father! . . ." And at the close of the discourse, the whole of St. Joseph

street was provided with lamps; after a while, others were placed in the darkest and most deserted streets, and soon the whole city was lit.

Thanks to Providence, the unbeliever himself will be forced to acknowledge that devotion to a Saint may be favorable to progress and civilization.

IX.

THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM.

ROMULUS had raised a temple in Rome in honor of Janus, worshipped as the god of Peace. Its doors were thrown open in time of war. The enemies of the Roman people compelling them always to have arms in their hands, the doors of this temple of Janus were only closed thrice before the reign of Augustus. They had just been closed a third time, for want of adversaries. It pleased the universal Pacificator to be born at the moment when the whole earth should enjoy the sweets of Peace.

The temple of Peace tottered, then, on its foundations, announcing that, in an obscure province of the Empire, a virgin had brought forth.

Augustus learned from the oracle of Apollo, that the demons were forced to fly before the young child of Heber, master of the gods, and God himself, to return to their gloomy abode, and that their silent altars must be abandoned.

Me puer Hebreus, divos Deus ipse gubernans,
Cedere sebe jubet, tristemque redire sub ——:
Aris ergo dehine tacitis abscedito nostris.

Two hecatombs had obtained this answer for him.

The Senate, whose members voted as one man, had just decreed him altars and the incense reserved for gods. Augustus, instead of accepting such honors, acknowledged that he was but a mortal; and shutting himself up in a remote room of his palace, alone with the pythoness, he inquired of her if there was not to come into the world a man greater than he. This was precisely on the day of Our Lord's nativity. The Virgin Mother of God appeared to him at that moment on the summit of the Capitol, holding her Divine

Son in her arms. The Sibyl, seized with the spirit that moved her in her inspirations, immediately cried out: *Ara primogeniti Dei.* Behold the altar of the first-born of God! That child is greater than thee. He it is who must be adored. (Suidas, Nicephorus, Vincent de Beauvais, Jacques de Voragine, Baronius, and others.)

Constantine the Great caused a temple to be built on that very spot, says Corneille de la Pierre, in memory of this event, and in honor of the most pure Virgin and her Son, which temple still exists, and is called by the people of Rome *Ara Cœli*, altar of heaven.

At Bethlehem, the crib was likewise an altar from which ascended the perfect adoration of Mary and Joseph, mingled with that of the angels come down from their thrones to pay their homage to the Word made flesh.

It was the partial accomplishment of what was prefigured by one of the loveliest types of Jesus—Joseph sold by his brethren, cast

into prison, and subsequently made the steward of Pharaoh, to save the life of his family. The sheaves which he bound in dreams were saluted by those of his brethren, and he saw himself worshipped by the sun and the moon as well as the stars. Which presaged not only his elevation and the humbling of Jacob and all his sons before him, but also the glory of Jesus and the homage to be paid him by His Mother, His adopted father, and His brethren.

And who were His brethren? All men, for He had entered the family of Adam. He gave them the name of brothers, and God declares that He is His first-born. Men were, then, to come to His feet to adore Him in their turn. The first invited to pay Him that tribute are poor keepers of sheep, because He is to take the title of Pastor, and will give His life for His sheep.

"There were in the same country," says the Gospel, "shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And

behold, an Angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.'"

At the same moment the Angel was joined by a numerous company of the heavenly host, praising the Lord, and singing: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will."

The harmonious voices had ceased to be heard, the echo of their wondrous melody had died away; the radiant forms had vanished, leaving behind only a train of light almost effaced by that of the stars, yet the shepherds still stood gazing upwards. It seemed as though their eyes still saw the

bright vision, and their ears still heard the heavenly harmonies. They remained motionless, leaning on their crooks, unable to overcome their ecstasy.

Raising themselves, at last, they said one to the other: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and see what has come to pass."

They took the best offerings their poor dwellings afforded: milk, fruits, lambs, and by the light of the stars journeyed towards the little city of David. Moses, of old, attracted by the flames of a bush that was burning, yet not consumed, left the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, and heard the voice of God announcing to him the deliverance of the people of Israel.

The shepherds of Bethlehem found the true burning bush at the end of their journey. The heart of Mary was a focus of the brightest and most intense fire. Holy and inextinguishable, those flames consumed it not, but made it blossom, and it brought forth the Word of God, who delivers us from the

oppression of the black Pharaoh. And He Himself, we are told by St. Vincent Ferrer, in an instruction on the Nativity, shone afar: "Going forth from His mother's womb," he says, "the Saviour appeared shining like the sun emerging from the mists of the dawn, and the hour of midnight was changed to noon-day."

The sky, the earth, the sea, and the vast universe appeared to the shepherds less wonderful than the poor cave of Bethlehem. All questions to Joseph and Mary seemed to them useless. They asked not why the child announced to them as the Christ of the Lord had not been born in a sumptuous palace, why his brow was not crowned, why he did not wear purple, why jewels did not sparkle on his clothing, why his cradle did not resemble a throne, why he was not surrounded by soldiers and ministers?

The signs that were given them to know Him in whose regard worlds are but atoms, were poor swaddling-clothes, a manger, a

little straw. They saw all that as they had seen the wonders that brought them thither. Their faith was not a surprise; an unknown ardor inflamed them. They prostrated themselves, and offered their gifts. Then, they related to Mary and Joseph the words of the Angels, and the wonders which had taken place.

Joseph confirmed all. He removed even the slightest clouds from their eyes by the discreet revelation of what he had himself seen. He made known to them how the Angel had dispelled his doubt, the prophecy of Micheas, the greatness of the Messiah, and other facts that strengthened their conviction and increased their devotion, and put on their lips praises that were soon spread abroad through every land for the glory of God.

As for Mary, she remained silent. It was not for her to make known mysteries of which she was the principal instrument. Modesty commended that reserve.

She meditated with a joyful heart on the gifts of the Lord. And what more fit to absorb her every thought, and to excite unutterable feelings within her? The promises of the Archangel Gabriel, the prophecies of Zachary and Elizabeth, the sanctification of John the Baptist, the enlightening of St. Joseph, whose uncertainty was for ever dispelled, her own virginal maternity, the destitution of her Son, His weakness, His poverty, the adoration of the Shepherds—what an inexhaustible source of reflection! Might not each particular fact, or the connection and comparison between one and the other, keep her in a continual ecstasy? What happy effects she afterwards saw flow from these events! Men who, in their rash and fatal temerity, had thought to become like unto God, became now gods, the Divinity being made flesh of her flesh: *Caro Christi, caro Mariæ*, all things were repaired, and the glory of God would be more known and more extended. This contemplation imprinted on her memory

the indelible remembrance of all the divine facts she was one day to confide to the Evangelists. It had more effect on the shepherds than the words of Joseph. It was impossible for them to resist a happiness so eloquent in its silence. They, therefore, did not leave that sacred place without returning new thanks to God; and when once they had returned to their flocks there was nothing so sweet, so enjoyable to them, as to tell over the events of the holy night to their families and friends.

Tradition has transmitted even to our own days graceful facts which followed the Adoration of the Shepherds, attesting the presence of Jesus and Mary in the neighborhood of Bethlehem, and which have ever been received with respect.

One day, Mary chanced to find herself at the entrance of the village where the shepherds dwelt. She wanted to quench her thirst and that of the Child; but the water was far down in the well, and those who were

there refused to come to her aid. Scarcely had she leaned over the edge of the well, when the water, of itself, rose up to her. That was henceforth Mary's Well.

Two hundred paces from Bethlehem is the Grotto of Mary's Milk. The Virgin Mother having gone in there to suckle her Son, some drops of her virginal milk, falling on the ground, gave the place a virtue which continues even yet. Pilgrims go there to pray, and take back to their own land a white water that springs from the rock, under the name of the Virgin's Milk.

Midway between Bethlehem and Jerusalem was also Mary's Tree. Mary and Joseph were resting in its shade. Its branches, springing together, formed a magnificent crown over the head of Jesus, as though doing homage to the God of nature and His august Mother. It might be admired even now, after eighteen hundred years of existence, had it not been destroyed by the proprietor of an adjoining field, under pretence

that his harvest was constantly trampled under foot by Christians and pilgrims. His incredulity was punished, a short time after, by a miserable death.

Finally, it is related that one of the brave Arab tribes, on hearing of the marvelous things which had come to pass at Bethlehem, descended from its mountains, and came to swear fidelity to Jesus, in His cradle. What is certain is, that the image of Mary, holding her Divine Son on her knee, was painted on a pillar of the Kaaba, their temple or sacred house, and that Jesus and Mary were placed amongst their three hundred and sixty deities. They prostrated themselves before them to ask them for favorable winds and seasons. History even assures us that after the Massacre of the Innocents, they rose up, with fierce cries of blood and death, to avenge Jesus and Mary, and that they dared to attack Herod, defended by his army and the Romans.

X.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

"PEPITA, my good Pepita," a good burgher of Valencia ventured to say to his housekeeper, after turning his tongue at least seven times in his mouth before he decided on speaking; "Pepita, I would like to ask you to prepare a real good dinner for Christmas Day."

At this beginning, which indicated the fear wherewith she inspired her master, Pepita knit her brows, and showed in all her movements, the contradiction which the worthy Spanish burgher might have expected.

"You are very late in telling me, master," she replied in a sharp tone; "we are at the 23d of December, and the day after next will be Christmas."

"But you have more than twenty-four hours to make your preparations——"

"Are you jesting, master? It is easy seen that you hav'nt the least idea of the trouble that housekeeping gives! Are not those twenty-four hours more than employed already? Have I not to polish the furniture, wash the windows, and clean up the whole house, as I do before every great festival?"

"You can put that off for a week or so; the house is as clean as it needs to be."

"One can see plainly that you know nothing about it. And then, my conscience! must I not clean it, too? You are good, master; it seems that no one but yourself has a right to work out their salvation! If you want to go to communion on Christmas night, why don't you want me to do the same? Is it that my soul is not worth as much as yours?"

"No, no, my good Pepita; you know I am very far from having such thoughts as that.

On the contrary, I want to make you merit heaven——"

"By patience, is it not? You exercise it remarkably well, master! I don't know what keeps me from going to end my days in a convent, where I might, at least, make my devotions in peace."

"Oh, do not leave me, Pepita! What would become of me without your care? Wait till I die to retire to a convent; you will then have the means of paying something for your board."

"Why do you speak of death?" said the housekeeper, wiping away a tear, either real or pretended; "you will live a long time yet, please God! I take such good care of you."

"I know, my good Pepita, all I owe to your care and attention; but could you not add to the obligation by getting me up a nice little dinner on Christmas Day?"

"Provided you don't have many people!"

"I will only have one family—a man, a woman, and a child."

"I think an *olla podrida** and a roast would be enough for that."

"Undoubtedly; but these are people whom I want to treat with all possible respect; so let the roast be a good pair of pheasants, stuffed with truffles; then some nice pastry, and some of those sweet dishes you make in such perfection, Pepita."

"If they are people of distinction," thought the housekeeper, "they will, maybe, give me a present, as it is customary to do."

She prepared everything, accordingly, with right good will; but great was her disappointment when she discovered in the expected guests poor neighbors of humble condition, whom her master received with the greatest cordiality, and even affection.

She waited upon them in the worst possible temper, which the host did his best to

* A favorite dish all through Spain. It is a sort of "stew" made up of fowl and various other ingredients. The *olla podrida* is to the Spaniards what the "*haggis*" is to the Scotch.—TRANS.

disguise by doing the honors of his table in the best way he could, causing the best wines of his cellar to be served in abundance. Never had those good people enjoyed so comfortable a meal.

The year following, there was the same circumlocution on the part of the master, the same objections on the part of the servant to lend her aid in what she called a ridiculous whim. It is easily understood that this woman exaggerated her trouble and the merit of her interested services; she had continued to persuade her master that her cares were indispensable to him, and singularly abused the authority he had allowed her to assume. The friends and relatives of the old man had been long since estranged from him by the opposition and disagreeable ways of this woman.

Such is often the fate of selfish persons who, desirous of avoiding the trouble and expense of marriage, fall, in their old age, under the tyrannical yoke of a servant who

is, at least, deficient in education, if not in good principles.

This was not precisely the case with the hero of this legend, who was a widower, and had reason to regret his departed wife, who, be her imperfections what they might, had never made his life so wearisome as did his housekeeper.

But although he usually allowed Pepita to lead him at will, he this time stoutly resisted.

"So you want to entertain beggars again!" said she.

"Come now, Pepita, I have made a vow, and I must accomplish it. Let us see, you who have religion, have you never been troubled thinking of the rebuffs the Holy Family met in Bethlehem, and do you not regret that you were not there to give a kind welcome to such holy and venerable guests? Well, what we were not in the way of doing then, since we did not exist, we can do now, by welcoming in their stead the poor who represent them in our regard.

Notwithstanding her bad temper, Pepita had some sentiments of piety, and this appeal to her heart was not made in vain. So it is that true charity is contagious. Pepita, therefore, welcomed her master's guests this time with more kindness, and ever after treated them hospitably when Christmas Day came round, without placing any further obstacle in the way of their entertainment. Henceforth, she even assisted the old man in the distribution of his alms; and, although she never failed to help him a little in getting over his purgatory, she thus went with him to the very gate of Paradise.

Having reached an advanced age, the worthy burgher at last saw his end approaching. Notwithstanding his pure and charitable life, which seemed to promise him a holy and a happy death, he judged himself severely by the dawning light of eternity.

He reproached himself for not having been fervent, or mortified enough; and, above all, for not having given more alms.

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"What good," said he, "will that money I have taken such care of be to me now, when I can take none of it with me?"

"It is true I have poured some little of it into the lap of the poor; but if I were to begin my life again, judging the things of this world as I now do, I would have been much less sparing of it."

The devil strove to turn this disposition to account by throwing him into despair, and inspire him with terror, which the voice of Pepita, still somewhat sharp, could not calm; indeed, it was only that of the priest, who brought him the last helps of religion, that gave him any comfort.

His agony was just beginning.

All at once the door of the sick-room, from which all strangers were excluded, opened of itself, and three august visitors presented themselves at the bedside of the dying man.

They were Jesus and Mary, the hope and salvation of the dying, and Joseph, the patron of a good death!

The very sight of them would have brightened with joy the failing eye of the dying man, but how his heart must have swelled when he heard from their sacred mouths these consoling words:—

"Thou hast so often seated us at thy table, that it is only just that we should come at last to invite thee to a seat at ours."

Thus divinely consoled, the sick man yielded up his soul in the peace and joy of the Lord, and went to take his place at the heavenly table.

The authenticity of this miraculous story is guaranteed by St. Vincent Ferrer. Pope Pius VII. consecrated the touching example given by the burgher of Valencia, by granting an indulgence of seven years, and as many quarantines to all persons who shall give three poor persons to eat, in memory of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, provided they have true contrition for their sins. This indulgence becomes plenary, if, on that day, the author of this good work has confessed and received

communion. As for the members of the family who contribute, were it only by their presence, to that hospitable act, and the servants who assist in its performance, they each gain an hundred days' indulgence. (Pius VII., 1815.)

XI.

THE PARIS DRESSMAKER.

SAINTS have been seen in all states, and professions that seem the least compatible with an evangelical life, have in heaven their representatives, whose works are so much the more meritorious that they were exercised in the midst of elements the least favorable to salvation. Every one knows this truth, and yet it is no small subject of surprise when we find in a dressmaker the truest sanctity, living as she did in the bosom of a capital called, with good reason, the modern Babylon.

It is that "the Spirit blows wheresoever it will," and chooses its elect wherever it pleases. The person of whom we are about to speak had been tried in her earliest years by the selfishness and harshness of a mother who

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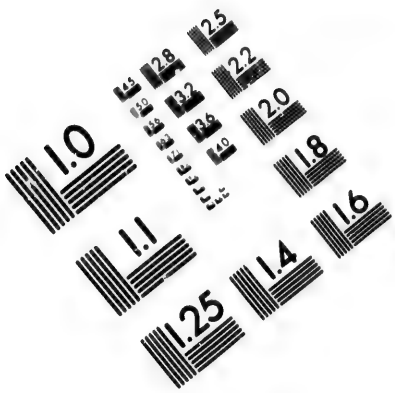

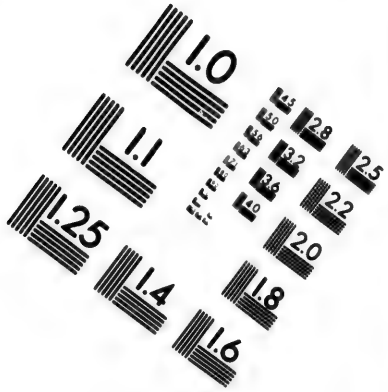

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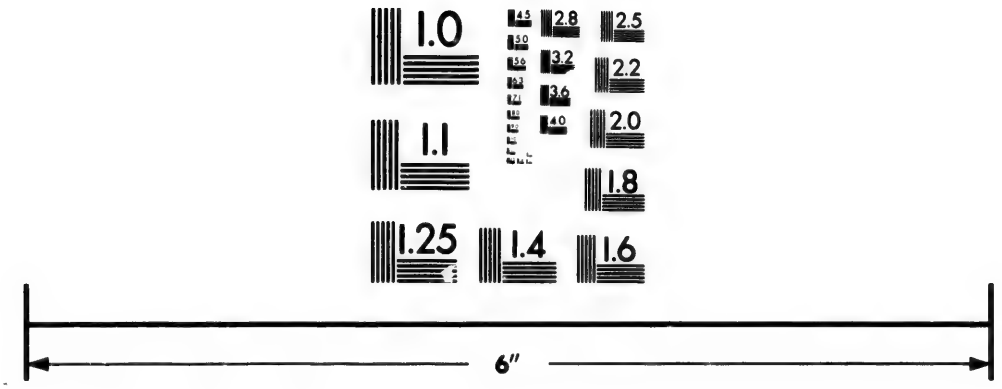

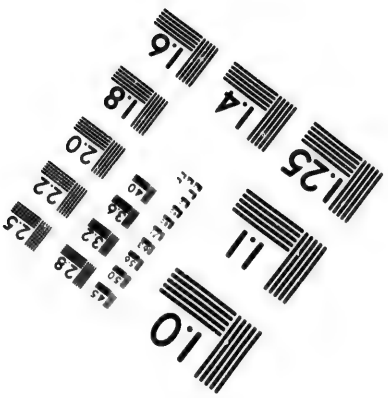

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had made her suffer severely. Having thus been exercised in abnegation from her most tender years, she early contracted the salutary habit of a very uncommon submissiveness and self-denial, of which she was to have great need all her life through. She referred to God all her actions and all her sacrifices, and often invoked Mary and Joseph, in whom she felt a most filial confidence,—a confidence that often brought her to the foot of their altar, and made her there find her sweetest consolation.

Reverses of fortune were her lightest griefs. Sought in marriage by an estimable man who had noticed her from her childhood, she saw all her hopes of domestic happiness overthrown by her mother, who compelled her to contract a marriage against her will. In this position, which would serve as an excuse for many a young woman, temptations were not wanting to that poor, thwarted heart. The former lover died of grief; but she who had been his betrothed found in the sense of duty

courage to live; and yet that duty was made very bitter to her by the unworthy husband whom her filial submission had forced her to accept. Addicted to idleness and love of pleasure, he found it convenient to leave all the burden of household expenses on his wife, and also his own support. Every employment was too laborious for him, but nothing was good enough or fine enough for his personal wants. To excuse this conduct, as well as his odious brutality, he published calumnies concerning his wife, which no one believed, so evident was her virtue. After long years of such trials, patiently endured by the meek victim, her tormentor having at last found a situation to his liking, he thought fit to enjoy it alone, and quitted his wife's home, carrying off from it everything he could, leaving the poor woman only empty rooms, the charge of four children, and for all indemnity, only the benefit of his absence.

Be it understood that bread was dear just then, and the little earnings of the poor mo-

ther were often insufficient for the wants of the family. Then the deserted wife went to some church, to prostrate herself before the Blessed Virgin's altar, and there, addressing the august spouses of Nazareth, who had lived, like her, by their own toil, she told them of her distress, with trusting simplicity,—and never was her prayer in vain.

On one of these occasions she was returning home, serene and joyful, especially on account of the evident assistance of her holy protectors, having just received a small sum of money, her first use of which was the purchase of a large loaf of bread, and some trimmings for her work. All at once she perceived that she had lost the pocket-book containing her treasure. By no means alarmed, she goes back to the church, where she had prayed successfully some time before, and, addressing herself to Joseph and Mary, she reminds them that it is to them she is indebted for her small means, and beseeches them not to allow her to lose the fruit of their benefit. "You are

my father and mother," she added (this was her usual form of expression). "You have accustomed me to count on you; would you, then, have assisted me in vain? No, you will not suffer my hopes to be so cruelly betrayed, and you can easily restore to me what I owe to your goodness, and what you know well is so necessary to me!"

And calm and smiling she went back home with her slender store of provisions. She asked the woman who opened the door if anything had been brought for her.

"Are you expecting anything?" asked the woman, envious, like most of her class, and glad of a pretext for entering into conversation.

"Ah! I have lost my pocket-book," the dressmaker replied, "and I expect that some one will bring it back."

"How simple you are, madam, to suppose that any one who has got so good a chance will be so ready to give it up again! What is good to take is good to keep. I fear you may make a cross of it."

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"Pardon me, I expect to get my money back," said the dressmaker, "for I placed the affair in the hands of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. They know I have need of it, and they have never yet left me in trouble without help."

The woman of the house burst out laughing, whilst her tenant, no wise disturbed, went up stairs to prepare the humble family meal.

Arrived at the landing-place, there was another obstacle, of which she had not before thought: the key of her room was gone in the lost pocket-book. To call in the services of a locksmith, without any means of paying him whatever he might charge, was not to be thought of! But our dressmaker had no time for reflection as to what she should do. She had scarcely reached her own door when she heard the woman below calling to her that a gentleman wished to speak to her.

That gentleman was the bearer of the pocket-book, so confidently expected; having found it, and ascertained the address of the

owner, he had lost no time in returning it, supposing that it would be anxiously looked for.

"Well, no, sir, I was not very anxious," the dressmaker said, after thanking him, "I knew some one would bring it back."

"Your confidence surprises me, madam," said the obliging individual. "In restoring that which belongs to you, I have only done the simplest and most natural thing in the world; but you know your pocket-book might have fallen into bad hands. I see you are quite a philosopher, and set little value on money. Doubtless your position enables you to do so."

"On the contrary, sir, this money is all I have in the world; and I am far from despising it, for I need it to give bread to my family; but I had commended the matter to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. They are my Father and Mother; they have never abandoned me; and now you see the proof that my hope in them has never been in vain."

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"Truly, that is what confounds me. I am a Protestant; and, as such, would never believe in the efficacy of invoking the saints; but here is a fact that strikes me very forcibly, and would almost inspire me with a wish to become a Catholic."

"And I," cried the woman of the house, who had been an attentive listener, "Catholic as I am, this makes me think that I must become a better Christian than I have been."

Let us hope that these salutary desires may not have been in vain!

XII.

A MEETING.

FORTY days have passed since the night of the miraculous birth, and the moment has come when the Virgin Mother is to go up to the Temple of the Lord to present the Child Jesus. Before following the Holy Family in this mysterious journey to Jerusalem, let us pause a moment in Bethlehem, and ponder with loving, docile hearts on the mysteries about to be accomplished.

The law of Moses, the perfect type of theocratic government, must already have constantly reminded the Hebrew people of their entire dependence on the Creator. Shut up in a small portion of the earth, that privileged nation was to keep there the sacred deposit of the primitive truths, disfigured by

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the fabulous cosmogonies and philosophical aberrations of the pagans. With a similar end in view, Moses could not allow to pass unnoticed, in the life of the Jewish woman, the benefit of the blessing given to her womb. The honor of having a flourishing posterity was too great for her not to testify her gratitude to the Lord; and, on the other hand, the belief in the original stain caused the mother of the new-born child to be defiled with a legal impurity. Hence the two sacrifices of holocaust and of expiation, imposed on the woman who had newly brought forth. A second Divine command declared all the first-born the property of the Lord, and prescribed the way to redeem them. The price of this ransom was five shekels, of the sanctuary weight, equal to about twenty farthings.

Mary, a daughter of Israel, had brought forth; Jesus was her first-born; doubtless, such a child-bearing, such a new-born, required not the accomplishment of the Jewish

law. What connection was there between the spouses of men and the chaste Spouse of the Holy Ghost, a Virgin in the conception of her Son, a Virgin in her ineffable child-bearing, ever pure, but still more pure after bearing in her womb, and bringing into the world the God of all Holiness? If she considered the sublime quality of Him who deigned to be born of her, that majesty of the Creator, the Prince of Peace, the Sovereign Arbiter of the universe, how could she think that such a Son was subject to the humiliation of the ransom, like the veriest slave?

But Mary was the humblest of women; she remembered her duties as a daughter of Sion, and to fulfil them neglected her prerogatives as the Mother of God. The Virgin did not think it derogatory to the honor of her Son, nor to the glorious merit of her own purity, to come to seek an external purification of which she had no need. Thus, at the appointed time, she set out to present in the temple her Child and her modest offering—

innocent birds, typifying, first, chastity and fidelity; and secondly, innocence and simplicity.

What an admirable journey was that of Mary and Joseph going from Bethlehem to Jerusalem! The old man carries the humble offering of two doves and five shekels, the ransom of the first-born son. The Divine Child reposes gently in His Mother's arms; she presses Him to her heart all the way on that auspicious journey. Heaven, earth, all nature, are sanctified by the benign presence of their merciful Creator. The men amongst whom that Mother passes along with her tender Infant regard her, some with indifference, others with interest; but no one of them yet penetrates the mystery which is to save them all.

At length, that holy and sublime Family has entered Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth! Do not the names of these three places, associated with the mortal life of the Redeemer, recall, in their magnificent

progression, the most striking marvels of power and goodness? The Saviour of the world is conceived in Nazareth, which signifies *the flower*, for He is, as He says in the mysterious Canticle of love, the flower of the fields and the lily of the valley, and His Divine odor delights us. He is born at Bethlehem, *the house of bread*, in order to be our nourishment, our life, the precious germ of our immortality. Near Jerusalem, a sacred city whose name signifies *vision of peace*, He is offered in sacrifice on the cross, and by His blood He restores peace between heaven and earth, peace amongst men, peace in our souls, that ravishing peace which surpasses all understanding.

On this solemn day, crossing the threshold of the temple, He is about to give the earnest of that Divine, unknown, unutterable peace. Amongst that concourse of sacrificers, in the midst of that crowd of the children of Israel that throngs the several precincts of the temple, many are looking for

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the Deliverer, and know that the hour of His manifestation is at hand; but none of them know that at that very moment the expected Messiah has just entered into the house of God.

Meanwhile, the humble daughter of the tribe of Juda, the living ark, bearing her Divine burden, ascends the steps of the holy place; she comes, like the other women of Israel, to offer the sacrifice of purification, for the birth of the Son whom she had conceived by the Holy Ghost, but who was to be presented in the temple as the Son of Mary, spouse of Joseph. The slight offering of the daughter of kings was accepted, in consideration of her extreme poverty. Perchance the man in the purple cloak and gilt sandals, within the sacred enclosure, may have let fall some contemptuous words, or cast a disdainful glance on the couple who brought to the altar only the two doves of the poor. And yet, that couple, so timid, so simple, so obscure, present another offering, far more pre-

cious than that of the haughty and the rich; it is the Infant God, the Lamb without spot, who bears in His veins the blood of the world's redemption.

But Jesus is specially offered to His Father, although the price of His ransom has been paid, as being one day to be the Priest and the Victim of a new sacrifice, more perfect in itself and more efficacious than all those of the old Law. Thus, the synagogue began to give place to the Church, bright with the hope of a resplendent future; thus, Christianity, the law of love, of meekness, and of humility, came to deliver the old Jewish and pagan society from servile fear as from the pride of sages, and to enter upon an immense career of progress and of regeneration. The shades and figures wherein was enveloped the second temple, whose future glory was announced by the prophet Aggeus to the Jews returned from exile, were opening to the rays of the Sun of justice and of truth. The tiara of the high priest was losing its last

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gem; the precious stones of his "rational" were shedding their last rays. The society of which he was the head was soon to be, in regard to Jesus Christ, but an old and cruel stepmother, drunk with wrath and envy.

The Holy Family was about to leave the sacred enclosure wherein so many incomprehensible mysteries were accomplished, and retrace the way to their humble dwelling, when the spirit of the prophets, the last sublime power of the Mosaic legislation, came, in the person of Simeon and Anna, to bear its testimony, too, to the future King of Israel.

Simeon, a just and God-fearing man, spent his days in expectation of the Desired of nations; and, as the price of his hope, the Holy Ghost, whose voice never deceives when it speaks, had told him that his eyes should not close in death until he had seen the Christ. At the moment when Mary and Joseph were ascending the steps of the sacred enclosure, the pious old man feels him-

self moved interiorly by the irresistible force of the Divine Spirit; he goes forth from his dwelling, he directs his tottering steps towards the temple, sustained by the ardor of his desires. On the threshold of God's house, amongst the mothers who are there in crowds with their infants, his inspired eyes have soon recognized the fruitful Virgin foretold by Isaiah, and his heart flies to the newborn Babe she holds in her arms. Mary, instructed by the same Holy Spirit, allows the old man to approach; she places in his trembling arms the dear object of her love. Happy Simeon, living image of the ancient world, grown old in expectation, and ready to fall: scarcely has he received the sweet Fruit of Life, when his youth is renewed like that of the eagle. In him is accomplished the marvelous transformation which is to be wrought in the human race, when once Catholicity is substituted for the ancient idolatry.

From the blessed lips of the old man escape that beautiful hymn of thanksgiving:

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"Now, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace. Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people, Israel." After these words, he restores to the arms of the Most Pure Mother the Son she is about to offer to the Lord, blesses the spouses, and in the inspiration that animates him, he foresees the bloody expiation of the Golgotha. "This child," he exclaims, after a grave and mournful silence, "is come for the ruin and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted. Thine own soul, O Mary, a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed," adds the old man; and very soon his soul, disengaged from the bonds of the body, goes forth to bear to the elect who repose in Abraham's bosom the news of the peace that is appearing on earth and will soon throw heaven open to them.

There was also in Jerusalem a prophetess named Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser. This widow, illustrious by her piety, and venerable to all the people by her great age, dwelt constantly in the temple, offering her prayers and fasts to God night and day; and, when she had heard the Canticle of Simeon, she also set about celebrating the auspicious coming of the Child of Promise. And Mary, ever Virgin, pressing to her heart the Divine Emmanuel, and accompanied by her faithful spouse, descended the steps of the temple, and in silence regained the village where she dwelt.

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XIII.

THE PALM GROVE.

THE holy old man Simeon had, as we have related, foretold to the Virgin Mary that a sword of sorrow should pierce her heart; and it was written in heaven that these words were soon to be accomplished.

It was about the middle of February when the voice of Jehovah broke by night on the peaceful sleep of Joseph, and these were the words he heard: "Arise, and take the Child and his Mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

The echo of the mysterious revelation was still sounding in Joseph's ears, when, going hastily to the door of his holy Spouse's room,

he said, in a trembling voice: "Mary, arise quickly, take Jesus in thine arms, and prepare to set out on a long and perilous journey."

Mary, who was by the side of her Son's cradle, went quickly to open the door for her husband.

"To leave Nazareth!" said the Virgin. "Whither, then, would the Lord have us bend our steps?"

"Into Egypt; so God commands. Herod is seeking for the Child, that he may put Him to death."

Mary groans piteously, and, bending over her Son's cradle, embraces Him fondly, and clasps Him to her bosom, as if to shield Him from the murderous dagger.

The Divine Child awoke, giving His dismayed Mother an angelic smile; that smile, like the sunbeam after the storm, quieted the Virgin's troubled mind. Turning to her holy spouse, she says: "Joseph, fear nothing; Jesus smiles, and His smile is like the evening rainbow dispelling the stormy clouds."

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"God commands us to do what I have told thee," answered the patriarch.

"Let us go, then," added Mary, with holy resignation, "and may Jehovah, from the highest heavens, watch over us!"

The spouses quickly prepared what was needful for the journey; but, alas! they were so poor, that in a few moments all was ready.

The earthly Trinity set out from Nazareth, with tearful eyes and sorrowing hearts, when the star of night was mid-way on its mystic course.

The Angel had announced to Joseph a great danger, but he had not told him how he should avoid it.

From Nazareth to Egypt there was a distance of one hundred and sixty leagues. How was that long journey to be made? A new obstacle presented itself. How were they to cross the sandy plains of the desert with no other conveyance than a poor ass? How could they avoid the bands of Arabs whom even the best-armed caravans could not re-

sist? Our poor travellers will have only tears and supplications wherewith to oppose the weapons of the enemy.

The day was already beginning to dawn, and the fugitives, who were yet no farther than the tribe of Zabulon,—fearing lest they might be discovered by the soldiers of Herod, concealed themselves in a grove of palms, the solitude and dense shade of which promised them shelter during the hours of day. The murmur of the waters of a neighboring stream, the sighing of the breeze amid the branches, together with the tender cooing of the turtle, and the measured song of the sparrow, charmed with their melodious echoes the sojourn of the fugitives in that hospitable vale.

The smile of the innocent child, the transparent sky, and the balmy air of the fields, were beginning to calm the anguish of Mary's heart, when Joseph, who was busy preparing their simple repast, stopped short all at once, and stood listening with an anxious ear, then said: "Didst thou not hear, Mary?"

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The young Virgin listened a moment, suddenly turned pale, and instantly clasped her beloved Son to her heart.

The Child smiled no more, the cooing of the doves was no longer heard, and the song of the birds had ceased. At this moment a dark cloud obscured the sun's radiant disc.

"I hear," murmured Mary, in a low voice, "a sound like the clash of arms and the tramping of horses, at the opposite extremity of this valley."

"Yes, on the mountain side, towards the Roman road that leads to Uspies. But it is doubtless some merchants from Ptolemaide or Tyre, retracing their homeward way."

"If they were Herodians!" said Mary, with shrinking dread.

"Have no fear," said Joseph, "this vale is far from the high road."

A few moments and the tramping of horses was heard distinctly. Mary hid Jesus in the folds of her large loose cloak, and raised her supplicating eyes to heaven.

Joseph, on his side, stood mute and motionless, looking sadly towards the place whence the sounds that so alarmed him seemed to proceed.

A clear, manly voice, was soon heard singing a martial air, the ringing notes of which reached the ears of the fugitives, where they sat beneath the lofty palm-trees.

"They are Romans," murmured Joseph. "I cannot understand their words."

Mary remained silent, pressing her Divine Son to her bosom.

Nearer and nearer the voices came, and soon the breeze bore to the ears of the Holy Family the words of a Roman song. A moment after, the voice ceased. The steps of the horses were heard quite near the thicket. The fugitives hardly breathed.

The glitter of the Roman helmets and the soldiers' arms were now seen through the thick foliage. Mary was seized with fear, and turning her mild eyes upward, she said, in piteous tones: "Oh! beautiful palm-tree, that

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rearest thy mighty top to heaven, thou who sat nearer Jehovah than this poor Mother, tell Him not to abandon my innocent Child!"

At this moment the tree bent down to the ground, the large leaves of its broad green crown covering the Holy Family.

The soldiers of Herod passed close by the protecting palm-tree without seeing those whom its thick foliage concealed.

Some thirty paces distant was a fountain whose clear and limpid waters offered refreshment to the soldiers. But whilst they were quenching their thirst and chatting about the object of their journey, God sent to the Holy Family a refreshing sleep, doubtless in order that the afflicted Mother might not hear the conversation of her Child's persecutors.

XIV.

THE GOOD THIEF.

HAVING enjoyed a sweet, refreshing sleep in the shade of the hospitable palm-tree, Mary and Joseph awoke, just when the silvery rays of the moon, penetrating the foliage, rested in calm beauty on the brow of Jesus.

A smile of inexpressible tenderness played on the lips of the Holy Child, and a loving glance directed towards His Mother renewed in the heart of the Nazarene Virgin all the courage her soul required in order to continue that painful journey.

"Is this a dream?" said she, pressing her Son to her heart. "He who is the Life of my life still lives! God of goodness, His impious persecutors have not, then, shed His precious blood!"

XIV.

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"Yes, Mary, yes," answered Joseph, "the Angels of God announce danger to us, and the mighty hand of the Lord makes us avoid it. But time is precious, and the night will protect our march till we have reached the frontiers of Syria; then only shall we begin to be in safety."

At these words, the poor Virgin arose, and arming herself with that courage only possessed by mothers when the life of their children is in danger, she quitted the hospitable wood, and followed her spouse with the resignation of a martyr.

In this painful voyage, what troubles, what bitterness, what mortifications awaited the Holy Spouses!

At that period, bands of robbers were ravaging Palestine, profiting by the hatred of the Jews for the Roman soldiers; every day they committed scandalous robberies, horrible murders, and the traders of the neighboring countries could only travel well armed and in caravans.

By day, the Holy Family took refuge in the most secluded caves, waiting for the shades of night, to continue their journey. In this way they reached, after many perils, the confines of Samaria.

Now, one night, when the weather was cold and rainy, the Holy Spouses, with the Divine Jesus, were travelling along a deep and lonely ravine, when St. Joseph, walking in front, was stopped by a harsh, imperious voice, saying: "Halt there, or you are dead!"

Mary, frightened at the thought that this barbarous man was going to take her Child away from her, hid Him in the folds of her mantle.

This was the second time, since leaving Nazareth, that her mysterious journey had been interrupted by the voice of men. Before the unfortunate travellers had time to think of the danger that threatened them, they saw themselves surrounded by a crowd of men, who came out from amongst the brushwood and brambles of the ravine. Dag-

gers were already flashing above their heads, when St. Joseph said, in tones of mild entreaty:

"What harm have this poor Mother and her innocent Child done to you, that you thus raise your arms against them?"

"Old man, thou art right," said a strong masculine voice; "these men will not injure you in any way; they will swear it, and I am sure they will keep their oath."

He who thus spoke was named Dimas. In his youth he had known the practice of virtue; but a crime committed through paternal love threw him into the way of crime, and, on account of his courage, he had been chosen as captain by this band of robbers.

He had no sooner spoken than a passage opened through his companions, and approaching Joseph, who was mute and motionless with surprise, he again said;

"Fear nothing, old man; thy white hairs are thy security. And as for that poor woman who clasps her child so tenderly, fearful

that he may be taken from her, thou mayest reassure her: she is in no danger from us. If any one dared to harm her, our dagger would soon deal out justice. But the night is cold, and I see the poor young woman is suffering from the rain: here, put my cloak around her." And Dimas, taking off the goat's skin garment that covered his shoulders, gave it to Joseph.

"Oh, thanks, thanks, kind, compassionate man! May Jehovah reward thee as thou deservest, at the hour of thy death." And Joseph, shedding tears of gratitude, covered his spouse and her Son with the robber's cloak.

"Now, good old man, follow me with thy spouse. My stronghold is close by, and I hope thou wilt accept the hospitality I offer till the tempest roaring above our heads has somewhat subsided."

The holy travellers accepted the captain's offer, and some moments after they were installed in the kitchen of the rude fortress,

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where Dimas had a large fire made, so as to dry their drenched garments.

The robber chief treated his guests with the utmost care and attention. He had a plentiful meal served to them, and with his own hands prepared two beds with cloaks and skins, so that they might rest after the fatigue of their journey.

Before retiring, he asked the Mother if she would allow him to kiss her little Child; and Mary presented her Son, saying:

"Kiss my Son, since thou dost protect Him."

Dimas kissed the Babe and withdrew. When once more alone with his comrades, he told them: "I know not what I felt within me when my lips touched that Child; but, since, it seems to me that I breathe more freely, and that all my blood has been purified by His touch. A little while after, and all were asleep within the castle.

Next morning, when Dimas entered the chamber of his guests, they received him with

a smile of gratitude. The hospitable brigand had the morning meal prepared, and requested the Holy Family to go out and take the air in front of the castle.

"The day is fine," said he; "come with me, that your Son may breathe the pure mountain air. Mary and Joseph followed Dimas, admiring the robber's kindness of heart. As for the latter, he was so fascinated by the look of Jesus, that he could not keep his eyes a moment from his face.

When they reached the court-yard, Dimas took Jesus in his arms, and, showing Him through the loop-holes some flocks that were grazing near the castle moat, he said to Him in a kindly tone:—

"Seest Thou those sheep that are grazing quietly in the shadow of these walls. They are ours, and that little lamb, white as its mother's milk, is Thine: I give it to Thee, that Thou mayst recall the hospitality offered Thee by the brigand of the mountains of Samaria."

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Jesus smiled as if he understood these words, and His tiny hands stroked down the bandit's hair. The tender Virgin silently wept tears of gratitude, while contemplating this man bound to the way of crime, who treated her Son so kindly.

The Holy Family remained in the castle till sunset. During their stay they were constantly treated by the captain with the utmost kindness and attention. But the moment of departure came at last.

Whilst St. Joseph assisted Mary to place herself on the peaceful ass, Dimas held the Child in his arms. Jesus, as though He would reward him who had received Him so kindly, put His little arms around the bandit's neck. Then Dimas heard a sweet, melodious voice, like the sound of an Æolian harp when the night wind stirs its strings, and it said:—

"Thy death shall be glorious, and Thou shalt die with Me."

Dimas was struck dumb—astounded by such a prodigy. Whence came those mysterious

accents? Who had spoken those words? The Child in his arms was scarcely four months old.

Feeling that his strength was failing, and fearing lest the mysterious Child should fall from his arms, Dimas placed Him again in those of His Mother, who received Him with a loving smile. Then the Holy Family, after thanking their host, quitted the castle.

Dimas stood motionless, his eyes fixed on the holy personages who were receding from his view, till at last they disappeared behind the mountains. At length, stretching out his arms in the direction they had taken, he cried, with an indefinable feeling:—

"O Thou, the fairest of the children of men, and blessed above all, if Thou canst one day let me hear a word of mercy, remember me, and be mindful of my hospitality!"

Two-and-thirty years after, Christ on the Cross rewarded the charitable hospitality of the good thief by these words: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise!"

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XV.

THE CARAVAN.

GAZA, a maritime city of the East, the precious gem of the Philistines, whose walls are perpetually washed by the waves of the sea, was, from time immemorial, the meeting-place of caravans trading with Egypt. Near this city the Holy Family arrived one morning at dawn, after travelling for several days. The sufferings endured by our Galilean travellers during the journey were very severe.

Their usual refuge during the day hours were lonely grottoes, gloomy caverns, damp ravines, or wild woods. But if they had great dangers to avoid, they had difficulties no less great to overcome. Joseph stopped by a sycamore tree, and, having assisted his spouse to alight, he placed her sitting at the foot of the

tree. He then freed the ass from its light burden, the little baggage that formed the sole patrimony of the Holy Family.

Dimas had kept his word, for a little white lamb began to jump around Mary, who, with fond, motherly care, showed her Son the robber's gift.

"Mary," said Joséph, after finishing his work, "God has vouchsafed to guide and protect us to the borders of the desert. He will bring us forth safe and sound from amid the awful solitudes we are soon to traverse."

"In God abideth all power; from Him are all that mortals admire of great and wonderful," meekly replied the august Virgin.

"Thy resignation doth comfort me much, Mary; but I am about to leave thee for a short space. We must sell a part of our effects, so that the journey may be less painful. We are poor; but I hope we may still have the sum required to pay our passage in the first caravan bound for Egypt."

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humble beast, directed his steps towards the city of Gaza, whose walls arose some three hundred paces from there.

Mary remained alone, with her Adorable Son, sitting at the foot of the sycamore. A tear moistened her eyelids. That tear was the Virgin's mute and sad farewell to the peaceful animal which had done her such good service during her journey, and with which she was now parting for ever, since her spouse was taking him to Gaza with the intention of selling him.

Having wiped away her tears, she spread a skin on the smooth sward, and laid her Son upon it. Then she went to work to arrange on a large palm-leaf the materials for their frugal repast, so that her spouse might find it ready on his return.

Intent on her occupations, Mary had not perceived that within a short distance of the tree that served her and hers as a shelter arose two Arab tents, around which ten or twelve dromedaries were lying. Neither had

she remarked that some men were going to a neighboring fountain, and filling large leathern bottles, which they then carefully placed on the arched back of their dromedary.

Amongst these men there was an Arab advanced in years, and who appeared to be chief of all the others, for he gave them his orders, in a low voice, without taking any part in the fatiguing labors of his companions.

The old man walked, with folded arms, by the side of the tents as far as the spring. For a moment his eyes rested on the sycamore which sheltered the Virgin and her Child. Seeing Mary, the Arab was disturbed, as though he had recognized in her a person of his acquaintance. He then remained a moment undecided, his eyes still fixed on the Galilean.

The latter, solely intent on her Son, had not perceived that she was the object of critical attention on the part of the Arab. At length the silent observer of the Virgin, with that peculiar motion of the head which indi-

cates a resolution taken after some moments of indecision, advanced towards the tree that shaded Jesus and Mary.

"Woman, peace be with thee!" he said, slightly bending his head.

"Arab, may Heaven be propitious to thee!" quietly answered the Virgin.

"Forgive me, if my question appear indiscreet; but, judging from thy features, I deem thee of Galilee."

"Nazareth is my home."

"Was not thy Son likewise born in that city, the flower of Galilee?"

"In Bethlehem of Juda was He born."

"Then thou art Mary, the blessed Mother whom Abraham's Angels saluted, and to whom the Eastern Kings did homage?"

"It was my Son to whom such honor was due."

"Pardon me if I ask yet another question. For whom dost thou wait here, so far from thine own land? Whither art thou journeying?"

"I await my spouse; I am going to Egypt."

"To Egypt!" cried the Arab, in surprise; but I see no camels, nor any guide to conduct thee!"

"God is great and merciful! Who may read His designs? I only know that I am going to Egypt."

The mysterious words of Mary, the sweet and modest dignity of her accents, moved the aged Arab, who immediately replied:

"Favored woman, to whom kings pay their homage whilst thou abidest in a stable, thou art preparing to enter into the immense deserts of Etham and Pharaam, on foot and without a guide. I venerate thee, although I cannot comprehend thee. Say to thy spouse, when he returns from the city, that Hassaf, the Arab whom he saw at the fountain of Bethlehem, sets out to-day for the City of the Sun, whence he will afterwards journey to Alexandria, and that he offers him his friendship and his camels; should he accept, I await thee in my tent."

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An hour after Joseph returned from Gaza, and rejoined his spouse, his face sad and careworn. Mary received him with a smile, and asked him the cause of his dejection.

"What aileth thee, my dear husband?" she sweetly said.

"We must make the journey alone, without a guide to show us the unknown way through the desert, without a camel to shorten, for us, the immense solitudes we have to traverse."

"God doth not forget His own," replied the Virgin; "whilst thou wert seeking a caravan that would receive us for a small sum of money, God sent us a charitable merchant, who offers to conduct us to Heliopolis."

"God be praised!" cried Joseph, joyfully.

"Look!" resumed the Virgin. "Seest thou that old man who walks with folded arms, before his tents? Well, that is the chief of the caravan which is encamped near the ruins. He sets out to-day for the City of the Sun, and he has offered to convey us thither."

With a joyful heart Joseph went to meet the Arab, and the latter, with his rude frankness, offered him a camel for his wife and Son, without any remuneration.

"Jew," said Hassaf, "I offer thee but one camel, because I have no more to spare. All those that thou seest lying around belong to me, but they are all hired out to merchants of Gaza bound for Heliopolis, Cairo, or Alexandria. It grieves me, therefore, that thou must make the journey on foot with my servants."

"It matters little about me," said Joseph, joyfully, "if only my wife and Son journey without fatigue."

The patriarch forgot the grievous troubles that awaited him in the desert. Mary and Jesus had a camel for the journey — that was his sole desire. He at once loaded the camel lent him by the Arab with his few effects, amongst which were his carpenter's tools; for, in Egypt, he was to have no other means of support than that which gave him and

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A little while and all was ready. The traders from Gaza joined others from Egypt, and Hassaf, having had his tents taken up, gave the signal for departure.

XVI.

THE DESERT.

HAVING left the suburbs of Gaza, the caravan took the way to Matarah, and, some hours after, the camels' feet were treading the barren fields of Syria. Then lay stretched before the eyes of the travellers the boundless plains they had to cross. Far away to the distant horizon nothing was seen but sky and sand; a scorching wind, like the breath of a fiery furnace, produced a stifling heat.

The Arab, crossing his arms on his breast, and his feet on his dromedary's back, closed his eyes and meditated, as though seeking to lose sight of the immensity of space. That child of the desert regards those solitudes as his country. His body is strong as his imagination is fanciful; he knows the perils to which

he is exposed, and, nevertheless, he bears them with the courage of a child of nature.

But the tender Virgin, the delicate flower of Galilee, what must she not have suffered during that first journey? What must have been her anxiety for her beloved Son whom she bore in her arms? How long those first hours must have seemed to her maternal heart!

Meanwhile, the intense heat of the fiery sun inflamed the atmosphere, and numerous flies annoyed the little Infant Jesus, whilst He slept in His Mother's arms. Forgetting her fatigues and sufferings, to think only of those of her Divine Son, and unable to keep off that swarm of troublesome flies, Mary raised her eyes to heaven and breathed a fervent prayer. At that moment, the Infant God awoke, and gave His Mother one of those divine looks that made her forget all her pains and toils. He then stretched forth His little hands. Immediately the flies were changed into little birds with sparkling wings of the richest hues. And this bright-winged flock, flying joyously

around the Holy Family, charmed them by the splendor of their plumage, and the merry music of their warbling notes.

Night came on, and the intolerable heat of the burning sun at length ceased. The moon's silvery disc shone bright over those imposing solitudes, and the Arabs came to a halt.

The merchants put up their tents; the drivers unloaded the camels, and, having fastened them in a circle to stakes driven far down into the sand, they silently commenced their modest supper, composed of dates and dried wheaten cakes.

The Holy Family spread upon the sand a palm-tree cloth, which was to be their only couch. Their only tent was the starry dome of heaven glittering far above their heads. Poor, deserted, more destitute than the lowest servants of the caravan, they were offering to God the prayer of their hearts, when the old Arab, who had been their protector since their leaving Gaza, approached them with a cup in his hand.

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"Galilean," said he to Mary, "the Arab in the desert is sober through necessity, but he loves children, respects mothers, and is hospitable. Take this; it is a share of my daily allowance of camel's milk. To-morrow I may not be able to offer thee a single drop of water."

And without waiting for thanks, the Arab went to rejoin his companions. Mary accepted the old man's delicate offer, penetrated with gratitude for his generosity.

All that night the Galilean Virgin could not close her eyes. The vicinity of hungry and ferocious beasts filled her heart with ceaseless terror; their savage cries, their constant howling, reached her ears, and made her fear for the safety of her adorable Son.

How many bitter pains and troubles, what anguish of mind and body must the Holy Family have suffered during that long and perilous crossing of the desert, with the heat of a fiery sun, the scorching gusts of wind, and the cruel deception of the *mirage*, show-

ing them in the distance a lake surrounded by fresh shade, ever receding, and vanishing at last! Faith alone sustained our Holy Travellers under the trials and privations of that long journey.

At length, after much suffering and fatigue, the Holy Family perceived afar off the plains of Giseh, amid which arose the Pyramids like vast giants.

Danger had disappeared. Heliopolis, the City of the Sun, with its graceful obelisks, its tapering minarets, and the steel cupolas of its pagan temples, was in sight.

After a short rest, the caravan entered the city. When the Holy Travellers passed under the granite arches of the principal gate of Heliopolis, all the idols of a neighboring temple fell flat on the ground, saluting, from their profane pedestals, the true and only God, who came, a fugitive, to seek hospitality from the idolatrous Egyptians.

Meanwhile, the Divine Travellers avoided the populous Heliopolis, where living must

be too dear, and continued their journey to Matarieh, a charming little village in that vicinity, which possesses the only fountain of fresh water that there is in Egpyt. The Galilean fugitives stopped some two hundred paces from the village. A shady sycamore served them as a tent during that first night in Egypt.

Some hours after, the Holy Family were lodged in an humble cottage, which they owed to the charity of a colony of Jews who had settled in that country some years before, and there the virtuous Galilean and her worthy Spouse breathed in peace, far from the terrible Herod, the inhuman persecutor of the Infant Jesus.

XVII.

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH.

LET us transport ourselves to the age of Augustus, and, in thought, passing over time and space, picture to ourselves the fertile valley of the Nile.

The last rays of the setting sun were gilding with their faint light the Egyptian village of Matarieh. At the eastern extremity of the village, and not far from the small group of houses of which it is composed, a little straw-roofed cottage may be seen. Some paces from its lowly door, a sycamore spreads its leafy branches, as though it would shelter that poor dove's nest beneath its protecting shade.

A young woman, with a calm, serene look, a chaste brow, a mild and affable exterior,

NAZARETH.

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is seated at the foot of that tree. Her costume consisted of a woolen tunic, confined at the waist by a girdle, and a short linen veil. She was engaged in fabricating that Syrian lace so much sought by the daughters of Israel. From time to time she raises her eyes from her work, casts a glance towards the village, pauses a moment, as if expecting some one, and then, with a sigh, resumes her occupation.

The light of day was already receding before the shades of night, and still the young woman continues her work. The evening breeze begins to sigh through the branches above her head; the small birds sing farewell to the departing sun; the bleating flocks come down from the neighboring mountains to their fold, and the nightingales usher in the night by their melodious song.

The young woman looks once more towards Matarieh; a loving smile is on her rosy lips. "Ah!" she exclaims in a joyous tone, "they come, at last!"

And graceful as the young palm-tree of Yemen, stately as Queen Esther, she rises up and moves towards the village. A Child of six or seven years and a venerable old man are coming along the path which leads to the cottage. The old man carries a heavy axe, the Child a little bundle of wood. The young woman goes to meet them, and they cordially salute each other.

Then she takes the Child by the hand and takes Him towards the cottage. The old man, who follows them, raises his eyes to heaven, and on his venerable countenance is depicted the sweet emotions of his heart.

The lovely Child is clad in a simple tunic of a dark color; His hair falls gracefully on His shoulders, and His glance is as radiant as the day. A small deal table is set within the cottage. The repast is frugal, but peace and love dwell beneath that humble roof. The old man blesses the table with a patriarchal air, and the meal is begun.

"How thou workest, Joseph!" says the

young woman, placing a dish of herbs before the patriarch.

"Let us bless God, who wills it so, Mary," replies Joseph; "what troubles me most is this tender Child."

"Work never tires me; I am happy in sharing your poverty," says the Child in His turn; and His voice has a sweet echo that penetrates the very soul.

"Son of my heart!" cries Mary, fondly kissing His forehead, "the bread of exile is bitter. O Thou, soul of my soul, light of my life, sacred deposit given me by Jehovah, Thou, fair Child, who hast on Thy brow the majesty of Israel's kings, on Thy mouth the smile of Angels, and in Thy look the splendor of the invisible God of Moses, Thou endurest the hardship of our poverty without a murmur of complaint escaping Thy lips!"

"Mother," gravely replies the Child, "God, my Father, so ordained it. Let us adore His decrees, and await the hour fixed in His eternal designs."

The Holy Family having finished their slight repast, turned their tearful eyes towards Jerusalem, and sang the hymn of thanksgiving with their evening prayer. Then Joseph closed the door of their dwelling; Mary retired to rest in her little chamber; Jesus prepared His bed of mats, and the patriarch stretched his weary limbs on the straw that served him for a couch.

An hour passed, then two, then three; the night was dark, and all within the cabin were sleeping the sleep of the just. Then might have been seen a wondrous and supernatural sight. A cloud, white and shining as the foam of the sea, came down from heaven, and rested on the thick branches of the tree that overhung the cabin. The sides of that radiant cloud opened, and there came forth a fair-haired young man of majestic mien; his robe was white as that of the virgins of Sion; a star glittered on his brow, and a ray of divine light shone in his azure eyes.

The heavenly messenger moves with a

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stately step towards the cabin; the door opens before him, and, approaching the patriarch, he says:

"I am Gabriel, the chosen envoy of the Lord. I come to tell thee, Joseph, to arise, take the Child and His Mother, and return to the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the Child's life."

Having ceased to speak, Gabriel bowed his beauteous head on his bosom, and remained some moments in that humble posture. Then the cloud wrapping him around, he left the dwellings of men and disappeared in the air.

Joseph arose and communicated to Mary the orders of the celestial messenger. The following day the exiles quitted the hospitable village of Matarieh.

XVIII.

THE HAWTHORN BUSH.

AT the entrance of the desert, Joseph's brow darkened, and Mary's eyes filled with tears. But Jesus encouraged them with a look.

Our travellers journeyed a long way through those immense wastes of yellow sand, without tree, or bush, or blade of grass—without even a drop of dew. The rays of the sun were so hot and glaring that they made the yellow sands burn and shine like gold. The Holy Virgin and St. Joseph suffered from hunger and from heat; but they resigned themselves through love for their Child, and, full of confidence, they prayed instead of murmuring.

All at once the ass stopped and refused to go on; they were about midway in the des-

ert and in the heat of the day. St. Joseph looked anxiously at the Virgin, who was tenderly regarding her Son.

"My Child," said Mary, "what wilt Thou that we do?" Jesus answered by a sweet smile and stretched out His hand. Then the travellers beheld, only a few paces from them, a little stunted withered bush, which they had not before observed.

St. Joseph assisted the Holy Virgin to alight, and Mary spread her cloak under the bush, so that her Divine Son might rest. But behold! when they arose, instead of the poor withered shrub, they saw an immense hawthorn bush, covered with snowy, fragrant flowers; in its shade had sprung up a verdant sward, from amid which flowed a crystal spring, and, whilst they were thanking God, legions of Angels, with white robes and golden wings, came, bearing delicious fruits to relieve their hunger and thirst. And while Joseph and the Holy Virgin marveled at this prodigy, the Child-God said to His Mother:

"My Mother, even as this withered shrub hath blossomed under thy white veil, so shall bloom for my eternal court all those souls who shall seek a shelter in thy heart. As a pledge of this promise, it is my will that this bush, the seeds of which my angels shall carry throughout the earth, may blossom ever more hereafter in the month that shall be in future times consecrated to thee, and its flowers adorn the altars wherever men regenerated by my blood shall place thine image. And now, let us go whither my Heavenly Father sends us, so that His word may be fulfilled."

Then the Blessed Virgin took up her now perfumed cloak whereon the Child Jesus had taken His rest; and whilst the travellers went on their way towards the land of Israel, the Angels, dividing the branches of the blessed tree, carried them to the several parts of the world, singing the praises of God.

At sunset, three days after, our travellers reached the confines of Egypt. They had now only to cross Idumea to enter the land of

Juda. Joseph remarked with surprise that the great wastes of sand seemed to disappear beneath their feet. It was a miracle of Divine power.

Mary and Joseph regarded with worshipping love the Divine Child who was, in His turn, their guide through the desert.

XIX.

THE SECOND MEETING.

MEANWHILE, the sun had just set behind the horizon, and our Holy Travellers had to seek a refuge for the night. They saw a cavern a little way off. Jesus entered first, and a mysterious light shone on its gloomy interior. There, without other bed than their poor garments, their heads resting on the bare stone, the Holy Travellers took their rest.

About midnight, two men presented themselves at the mouth of the cave: one of them came from Egypt, the other from the land of Juda.

"Dimas?" said the former, in a tone of inquiry.

"Gestas!" rejoined the other.

"I have been punctual, thou seest."

"And I no less so."

"Shall we go in?"

The other assented, and both entered the cavern.

"Wilt thou that we strike a light?" asked Dimas.

"Wherefore? We can speak together without that; we are birds of night, destined to live in darkness."

"Thou sayest well. Let us sit down; I am fatigued."

The two men seated themselves on the ground. Whilst they conversed thus, the Holy Family continued to enjoy the sweets of calm repose.

"Thy messenger," said Dimas, after a short pause, "informed me that it is thy purpose to settle in Samaria with thy people."

"Yes," answered Gestas, "the desert is little frequented, and my soldiers, attracted by the hope of booty, are tired of waiting whole days in vain, under the scorching sun, in the deserts of Etham and Paraham. They want

me to lead them into Samaria; as thou art the chief of these mountains, I would fain know whether thou wilt give us hospitality, or, rather, if thou wilt allow thy castle to serve us as a refuge, and we will share our booty with thee as good friends."

"I have never refused hospitality to him who asked it at my door. There is my hand."

Gestas shook the hand held out to him, saying: "It is, then, agreed?"

"Even so. Thou mayst come when thou wilt; my soldiers shall have no arms against thine."

"The treaty is made?"

"I never break my word."

At these words, a deep sigh was heard in the depth of the cavern. Gestas put his hand to his belt to seize his knife, and said in a low voice:—

"There is some one here."

"I believe there is," answered Dimas.

"Wait; let us strike a light."

Gestas drew forth a sulphurated cord which he carried rolled up in his belt, and, going out of the cavern, he sought two stones, which he rubbed hard together, till the cord took fire, shedding a yellowish light and a suffocating smell.

Provided with this torch he entered the cave, and both commenced their search. Dimas was the first who saw the Holy Travellers asleep, and he started as though he had recognized them.

"Ha! there is an unexpected chance!" said Gestas, moving towards them.

Dimas seized him by the arm. "Hark thee, Gestas," said he, "looking at these poor people, I felt my heart beating as if it would go out of my breast."

"Bah!" said Gestas, shrugging his shoulders.

"I tell thee truly!"

"Well! what would'st thou?"

"That we respect the sleep of these unfortunates."

"I allow no such favorable opportunity to escape me. The Romans will do the same by me when they catch me."

"I beseech thee, by what is dearest to thee in the world, respect their sleep."

"What I love most in this world is money."

"Well! touch them not, and I give thee twenty drachms."

"It is very little!"

"I will further give thee this copper girdle, and this Damascus knife."

Gestas examined the objects. Dimas, seeing him hesitate, added:—

"If thou wilt not accept mine offer, I swear I will defend these people!"

These reasons decided Gestas.

"I agree," said he.

Dimas gave him the money and the articles specified. Just then was heard a voice from within the cave, saying:—

"Dimas! Gestas! you shall die with me: one on my right hand, the other on my left."

These words were, one day, to be fulfilled.

Let us transport ourselves, in thought, twenty-five years later, to the top of Golgotha, at the solemn moment when Jesus consummated His sacrifice on the cross. Two robbers were fastened on either side of Him. One, hardened in crime, joined his insults to those of the multitude: it was Gestas, the merciless robber; the other, to the right of Jesus, testified his faith and his repentance, and had the happiness of hearing the words: "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." It was Dimas, who, in the flight into Egypt, had saved the Infant God from the dagger of his comrades.

But let us return to our Holy Travellers, whom we left near the mountain of Thabord. Their eyes had already caught sight of the verdant plains of Nazareth. Who could tell their happiness? The time of exile was ended, their fatigue forgotten. They entered the town of Nazareth, amid the felicitations of all the inhabitants, who hastened to testify their joy at this unlooked-for return.

Joseph and Mary found their dear abode again. They dwelt there in profound peace, seeing Jesus grow from day to day, in age, in wisdom, and in grace, till the time marked out for the preaching of the Holy Gospel.

OSEPH.

their dear abode
profound peace,
to day, in age, in
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XX.

OLD-TIME WINDOWS.

I.

HOW I love the old Missals, with pictures so quaint,
And the simple designs of the windows of old,—
They quicken my heart, and I pause to behold
The artless portrayal of Martyr and Saint.

Though stiff the position, and dry each detail,
The coloring harsh, and too slender the form,
In the eyes beams a tender light, mystical, warm,
And faith, hope, and love in each aspect prevail.

Here the aged man is crown'd with a halo of light,
Erect, rapt in spirit, and with claspèd hands,
The Virgin bows down, and Our Lord smiling stands,
A martyr kneels here, there an Archangel bright.

How I love to behold them in tunics of gold,
With hoods, as it were, of the soft living light—
Through their face is the soul seen, all radiant and bright—
Once more we look on ye, fair visions of old!

Here the "Sucker of Jesse," near Booz and Ruth,
Here Judas, his soldiers, the Magi behold—
Our Lord, 'neath His cross, mark, O heart proud and cold;
But the Flight into Egypt most charms me, in sooth.

II.

Slowly paces the ass 'neath a fiery sun,
The spouse, staff in hand, praying, journeys along,
Leading the animal, patient and strong,
While the Virgin smiles down on her fair sleeping One.

Young Mother, that Babe, closely clasp'd in thine arms,
'Tis for Him that thou fearest the length of the way—
The hunger, the thirst, and the sun's scorching ray—
'Tis for Him that thou feelest a thousand alarms!

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What fearest thou, Virgin? Though eastward below
A fierce, cruel king vainly fumeth, at bay;
And, though Egypt be far in the blue mist away,
The Lord is still with thee, His power to show.

Everywhere the bare plain: to the horizon dry,
Nought, nought but the desert's dread sameness is seen;
No tree intercepts, in its foliage green,
The fierce rays that fall from a tropical sky.

The fair, spotless Child, in whom God takes delight,
Heaves a sigh in His infantile slumber, and wakes,—
But, hasten! those fields, those green meadows and lakes,
Illusions too fair of the waste-weary sight!

The ground, it is smoking; sand flies in the air—
The steaming waste stretching before and behind;
Like the dreadful simoom is the breath of the wind—
For her Infant sore grieved is that young Mother fair.

She says to her spouse, with an accent of woe:
"Oh, had we but water and shade for the Child!
We must sink 'neath our pains in this desert so wild,
If Our Merciful Lord will not comfort bestow."

O Virgin, the Lord hears the voice of thy prayer!
A tree is before thee, all plumy and green!
And hark! that faint sound where its shadow is seen—
'Tis the trickling of water that sounds on the air!

Lo! a palm tree, all laden with fruit—strange to tell!
And a blue, limpid spring, looking cool, fresh, and bright!
But the fruits—who can reach them, because of their height,
Or draw the cool water from out of the well?

The sweet Jesus opens His eyes, and, behold!
O travellers blessèd, ye find some relief;
The tree bends its branches—of wonders the chief—
And the water uprises, clear, sparkling, and cold!

Behold, now the wayfarers sit in the shade,
The ass browzes near on the fresh, new-sprung grass;
Fear is gone, and the Angels pass and repass,
In attendance on Jesus and the fair Mother-maid.

But a drop of the water the Babe Divine drank,
And a fruit he was eating — both fell to the ground,
When the fresh herbage, upspringing around,
Made that resting-place sacred — a green, flow'ry bank!

III.

In those days lived, in hope of the Saviour to come,
Whose reign was to bring back the glories of old,
A man who expected, ere yet he went home,
That promised Redeemer his eyes might behold.

A leper he was, and his plague-stricken form
Was an object of fear and disgust unto all;
He wander'd alone through the sunshine and storm,
All calm and resign'd to whate'er might befall.

The shade was his shelter. Yet, shunn'd and abhorr'd,
For all creatures he still had a kind, loving heart;
He was merciful, e'en as the Merciful Lord,
To the suff'ring he fain would some comfort impart.

"The One who hath come may look kindly on me,"
Was oft-times his thought; for the shepherds had told
How the Angels came down, Christ's glad heralds to be,
And the Wonderful Infant their eyes did behold.

He himself had once seen the good Kings from afar,
Who came with rich presents to lay at His feet;
To whose presence they journey'd, led on by a star,
That Babe of the Grotto, so fair and so sweet.

When wakeful one night, in the depth of his woe,
He saw—as God will'd it, to cheer his lone heart—
When warn'd by the Angel to Egypt to go,
The three Holy Travellers sadly depart.

"Ah!" thought he, "could I see but that aspect so mild!
Might I touch but His garment, my woes would soon cease!
While I breathe the same air with that Mother and Child,
I can live upon hope, I can journey in peace!"

If I follow wherever the Infant may go,
Beseeching His mercy, perchance He may hear;
He may listen with pity, and mercy bestow,
Who was laid upon straw in a birth-place so drear!"

Far away, far away through the mists of the dawn,
Was a motionless speck on the horizon dim,
From it were the leper's eyes never withdrawn,—
'Twas the Virgin and Joseph, and the ass that bore Him!

On the promise divine and the long-promised day
Of the coming Messiah, he ponder'd and pray'd,—
A sweet, soothing hope, chasing sadness away,
Still onward he went, of no danger afraid.

While he saw in the distance the Travellers blest,
The sight cheer'd him on with fresh ardor to go;
But they vanish'd at last, and his eyes could but rest
On the dreary horizon, so level and low.

Already the desert was circling him round,
Its gloomy immensity fill'd him with dread;
He listened in vain for one life-speaking sound,
All was silent and lone as the halls of the dead.

Then the torment of thirst he began to endure,
His limbs they were failing, his throat parch'd and dry:
"O Saviour!" he cried, "of Thy mercy I'm sure,—
I love Thee, I hope in Thee,—wretched am I!"

What sees he? though burning with fever's wild pain,
He runs—lo! a spring and a stately palm-tree!
But alas! the sweet succor to him comes in vain,—
The high fruit and low water he only can see!

He falls by the well, and in silence awaits
The death he feels coming—O myst'ry sublime!—
As it were from the earth a fresh air animates
His limbs with the vigor and strength of his prime!

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All fainting he came to that thrice-hallow'd place,
Where Thou, Divine Infant, had'st tarried a while!
And purified, now, as by baptismal grace,
The leper goes forth with glad heart and bright smile.

IV.

Months had pass'd. In a Judean village away,
A matron stood list'ning at close of the day,
To the tale that a dust-cover'd traveller told—
'Twas the leper and holy Elizabeth old!

He spoke of the long-promised Christ, who was born
Of Mary, at Bethlehem, poor and forlorn,—
These things did the Saint in her deep heart record,
And she cried, in an ecstasy, "Praise to the Lord!"

V.

O windows of the olden days,
What hallow'd legends ye recall,
While dreamily I stand and gaze
Where your bright-tinted shadows fall.

In the deep arch's shade I stand,
Leaning against a column high,
Musing on your old pictures grand,—
While hours roll all unheeded by!

I ponder'd on those Saints of old,
When lo! the sun gave forth his rays,
And pour'd a flood of radiant gold
From out those forms of other days!

Ah! speak ye ever to my soul!
Enkindle in my heart the flame
That guides us to our heavenly goal—
Ye works which lively faith proclaim!

When our belief we scarce dare own,
When faith has lost its ancient glow,
When man's frail works with pride are shown,
And earthly hopes rule here below!

Tells us, O eloquent remains
Of pious ages long gone by,
What prodigies earth yet retains
Of faith-taught art that cannot die!

And now, when in discussions vain,
Our modern Babel strives,
Oh! speak of heavenly things again,
Of old-time hallow'd lives!

JOSEPH.

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XXI.

THE SNAKE.

THAT long caravan through the desert plods on,
All Heaven looking down with a wond'ring delight?
One would say 'twas a beam o'er the bleak sands that shone,—
And the hosts of the Angels are round it in might!

An old man, a young woman, a delicate child,
So fair that it charms one to look on His face;
And Eastern women, whose eyes, dark and wild,
Are veil'd by their tears with a sorrowful grace!

And children, with glad, sun-brown'd faces, are there,
Unshadow'd by grief, or by life's chilling fears;
They chase the bright butterflies, pluck flow'rets rare,
And sport as though earth had nor sorrows, nor tears.

Then round the fair Infant they come in their glee,
To offer Him flowers, the fairest of all,
Their frolicsome play, all so blithesome and free,
Rousing flocks of bright birdlings, with loud laugh and call.

II.

And the women all said, in their sadness of heart:
"Ah! must ye, then, leave us, in far climes to roam?
Though the great God of Israël bids ye depart,
O Mary and Joseph, again will ye come?

"That thrice-holy God whom to us ye made known,
Doth punish us now, on this sorrowful day;
Ah! it may be that too little kindness we've shown,
That we did not do more to make happy your stay!"

But she who by Mary's sweet name they address'd,
Look'd upward and pointed to Heaven's blue dome,
And said, in a voice like soft winds from the west,—
"We shall meet once again in our only true home!"

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name they address'd,
to Heaven's blue dome,
winds from the west,—
in our only true home!"

But hark ! what loud cries
Are heard close at hand,
That, in wildest surprise,
The poor mothers all stand ?
With the echoes' lament
And the wind's hollow moan,
The sad cry, now blent,
O'er the desert is sent
In a faint dying groan !

To their well-beloved children the mothers all run,
A heart-rending sight meets their fear-stricken eyes:
All the late-smiling little ones, terrified, shun
A playmate, who, pale and inanimate lies !

Round his head a black snake is seen coil'd, like a ring;
Its poison has blighted the child's smiling bloom !
Like the bird by the fatal dart struck, on the wing,
The sweet victim lies as though cold in the tomb !

In his hands he still holds the bright garlands he twined,
The flowers yet fresh in their beauty and grace ;
Like the children the Indians with floral wreaths bind
Ere they're laid in the aerial tomb of their race.

Heart-rending the scene is. . . . But Mary is there!
She whispers a word to the Child at her knee;
And the sweet Jesus, smiling, advances to where
The dead infant lies—sight of sorrow to see!

The snake feels His presence, and quickly unwinds
His murderous folds from the fair drooping head;
The Master of Nature all plainly he finds
In the Child who approaches to raise up the dead.

"O reptile!" said Jesus, "who causest such woe,
Say, who hath empower'd thee this infant to kill?
For this deed thou shalt die, that thou thereby may'st know
The justice and power of the Almighty Will!"

O wonder!—the vile reptile rolls on the ground,
And dies, on the instant, in agonized pain,—
And the child!—on his cheek are the rose-tints soon found!
He opens his eyes, and is smiling again!

And kneeling before the Child Jesus, he speaks,
The spirit of prophecy guiding his voice:—

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ding his voice:—

"Prais'd and honor'd be Thou whom the weary soul seeks,—
Thou judgest the guilty, makest sad ones rejoice!

"The snake's deadly sting Thou hast heal'd on this day,
But one day Thou shalt save from a more cruel doom
The condemn'd race of man, in a wonderful way,
And raise all the dead from the sleep of the tomb!"

XXII.

THE PANTHER.

THE scene of the favor here to be related, and the place where it was asked, are very far apart. The prayer was offered up in France, and—in Cochin China the favor was obtained. But what are thousands of leagues to the Saints? Our great St. Joseph acted, in this case, very promptly—with greater despatch than even the telegraph operator. It is that there is no telegraphy like prayer, which ascends in a moment from earth to heaven, and brings down celestial graces. Here is the story:—

It was during the last expedition to Cochin China; a body of French troops lay encamped on the outskirts of a forest, and for some days men, having rashly ventured too far, had dis-

XXII.

PANTHER.

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French troops lay encamped
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appeared. The footprints of a wild beast had been seen in the vicinity of the camp, and it was suspected that the unfortunate men had been devoured. A courageous young soldier resolved to prevent the recurrence of such accidents, and went to ask leave of his commanding officer to go into the forest and beat up the enemy's quarters. The officer tried to convince him of the danger attending such an enterprise; but all in vain—the young man still persisted in his design. Permission was at last given him, on condition that he brought some twenty men with him. But so great was the danger that it was impossible to find the twenty men required. Our brave soldier, no wise disheartened, returns to the charge, and prevails on his commander to let him go with six men only.

It was not easy even to find six men for an adventure so perilous. Our young man uses some address: he goes privately and speaks to those whom he knows to be the bravest, animates their courage, makes them ashamed

to refuse, and so obtains the consent of each individually; the requisite number is completed, and the little band sets out on its march. Guided by the traces of the animal, they at length reach a part of the forest which they suppose to be near his lair: they tie between two trees a sheep, which they had brought for the purpose, and retire some distance. There our huntsmen post themselves in ambush, as best they may; but some of them being still a little fearful, they allow their leader to take the most advantageous position, and place himself some paces in advance.

They wait thus, their eyes fixed on the mark, trying to place their muskets in the proper direction; for the night is falling, and they will probably have to fire through the darkness. Night closes in, and yet they hear no noise. All at once comes a sound: it would seem to be that of an animal bounding: the noise increases, approaches the spot where the bait had been placed; nothing more was heard

except a faint bleating, indicating that the fierce beast must have reached its victim. The young man instantly discharges his musket, with steady aim: the others fire after him, but with less caution, and less confidence. The shots are followed by a profound stillness. Our huntsmen remain some time motionless, listening attentively, but they hear no further noise. They then advance cautiously, through the gloom, in the direction of the bait, and find the sheep stretched lifeless on the ground, torn by the claws and teeth of the ferocious animal; and as the night is dark, they cannot possibly continue their search. They return, therefore, to the camp, knowing only that the animal had fled, abandoning his prey, but ignorant whether he was wounded or merely frightened by the shots. Next morning, when it was light, they resumed their search, and at last discovered, in a thick brake, the body of an enormous panther. The beast, mortally wounded, had dragged himself to this brake, and there expired.

At this sight, the astonishment of the hunters was not less than their joy. The panther was wounded in the shoulder; that is to say, in the only spot where the wound could be mortal. Who had fired that marvellous shot? Of that there could be no doubt! It was, evidently, the leader of the band, who, posted in advance of the others, had alone fired with a sure hand and a steady aim. But how did it happen that, dark as the night was, he had just struck the vulnerable point? This was a mystery, and his comrades kept talking of a shot so remarkable. The young man himself thought nothing more about it. When, on their return to the camp, they told the story, their comrades were amazed; but finally all was attributed to chance. A very convenient explanation, to which there is only one objection, viz., that there is no sense in it, and that it explains nothing whatever! We are quite sure that many a soldier, remembering the lessons of a Christian mother, referred the honor of this marvellous shot where it was

due, and gave thanks to Providence: of that number must have been our young hero. In after days he well knew who to thank: but let us not anticipate the sequel of our narrative.

The expedition over, the young soldier returned to France; he had a mother and sister at home, and hastened to pay them a visit. After the first heart-warm greetings, the first thing he did was to relate his adventure; it was listened to with all the interest that a mother and sister would naturally take in such a recital. When he spoke of his wonderful shot and the general surprise it had excited, an idea appeared suddenly to strike his mother, and she quickly asked when the occurrence took place: the young man mentioned the exact time.

"That's it," cried the mother; "that's just it! It was our good St. Joseph did that, and no other: let us thank him together."

And as the astonished face of the young man seemed to ask for an explanation, his mother hastened to give it.

"It was a long time, my dear son, since I had heard anything of you," said she, "and I was very uneasy; so I went, one day, with your sister, to the altar of our good St. Joseph, and we got a taper burned before his venerated statue, begging of him to watch over you and bring you home to us safe and sound. Judge now whether our prayer was heard and was of use to you: it was the very night after we had done this (it might have been at the very moment, on account of the difference in time between Cochin China and France) that your courage and devotion brought you into such great danger, from which you had such a wonderful escape! There is no doubt about it: it was St. Joseph himself, to whom we had been praying, and, perhaps, were praying then, that directed the shot; it was by his all-powerful protection that your ball went straight to its mark, through the darkness, and killed that frightful panther!"

The fact was too evident to faith-illumined

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eyes for the young man to think of disputing it; but he had no wish to do so, and he hastened to join his thanks to those of his mother and sister. Many and many a time did that happy family repeat, with love and gratitude, the name of St. Joseph, who was ever after considered its powerful and kind protector.

XXIII.

THE URSULINES OF QUEBEC.

(A PAGE FROM THEIR HISTORY.)

A VOW made to St. Joseph having obtained for our Monastery its dear and holy foundress, it was very natural that from the establishment of that house St. Joseph should be regarded as its first and principal guardian.

Thenceforward, in every class-room, over all the principal doors, was placed an image of that good Father who, from the highest heavens, protects his children; the cross of the old steeple* bore on high the praise of his venerated name, whilst his tall, majestic

* It was in 1830 that, to make room for the erection of St. Ursula's class-rooms, it was found necessary to take down this old steeple, which had given, for more than one hundred and ninety years so monastic an air to St. Augustine's wing.

figure, above the portal, kept watch over the holy place. But go back in thought, dear readers, to the interior of the cloister, on the day (the 19th of March) on which the church and the altar were adorned with their richest ornaments in honor of their holy patron. Almost the whole day is spent before his altars; nuns and pupils are tendering to St. Joseph the homage of their gratitude for the past, of their love for the present, of their hopes and wishes for the future. Is it not true that his face then appears still more radiant? for he loves to be charged with commissions and requests for the sweet and Divine Child whom he holds in his arms.

When that day of grace is drawing to a close, the religious family assembles anew to salute its glorious protector. They repair to the places over which St. Joseph has watched all the year long. Instead of the bonfires of former times, the pictures and statues of the beloved patron are surrounded with lights and flowers. Here, it is St. Joseph *of money*,

who guards the stores and keeps away robbers; at the top of the great staircase leading to the granary is St. Joseph *of wheat*, charged with providing his children with their daily bread; in the kitchen, it is St. Joseph *of work*, blessing, for two hundred years, the humble labors of the servants of the Lord, and thence extending his care over the details of the out-door economy. But let us pause before the infirmary to salute with a still sweeter song him who guards its entrance; St. Joseph reserves his most gracious smile for us there, pledging himself to console us in sickness and to make our death joyful.

Here we are now in the holy place. Let us gather round the little altar where he guards the relics of our mothers with the same fidelity as he guarded their work. This greeting is the last, as it is the sweetest to the heart. What a charm there is in those hymns whose fervor and devotion are their chief harmony, and which the Angels, doubt-

less, haste to gather up to bear them to him who shares their functions as guardian and guide.

The great festival being over, other minor ones come in their turn to keep up filial piety towards the holy spouse of Mary Immaculate, homage is still paid him in prose and in verse,* and, on all occasions, each one knows who to apply to, in order to have their petitions laid at the feet of the Eternal.

But we must not leave this subject without speaking of the "Treasury of St. Joseph." Our readers may say: "And what treasury is that? Is it a trifling bauble in the number of visible things?" Yes, truly, that *treasury* of St. Joseph's is quite visible, especially to those who have the consolation of drawing from it. Let us explain.

About the time of the profession of the first novices, the Demoiselles Barré, de Boulogne, de Lauzon, and Bourdon, Mother Incarnation, wishing to secure the temporal, or, in

* See page 184.

the language of our age, the *material* interests of the Monastery, conceived the idea of depositing in a cash-box, apart from the other money of the house, the *portions* of the religious, as well as the payment for board. This wise forethought of our Mother was so blessed by God that the cash-box never failed to provide the community with something for the poor, notwithstanding all the mischances and reverses of two hundred years.

Well, dear reader, the cash-box of benediction still exists, and therein is now placed that portion of the annual revenue that may be disposed of on behalf of others. According to our annals, this treasury has never failed for any good work; but we ought not to be surprised at this, since we know that it was to St. Joseph our venerable Mother confided the key.

There yet remains to be noticed the ancient niche in the garden, to which some of our readers have made many a pilgrimage of love. There it is that St. Joseph watches ever his

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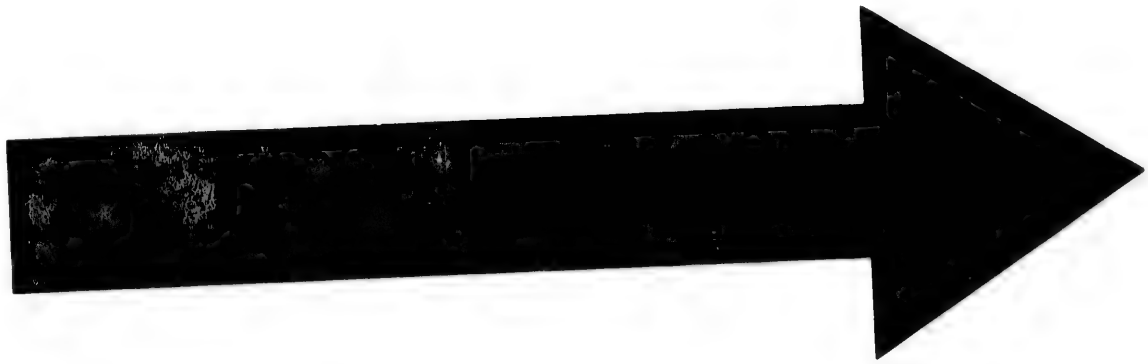

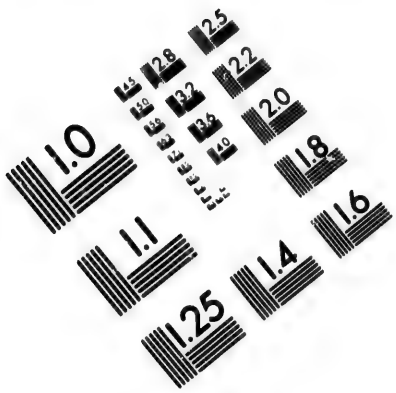

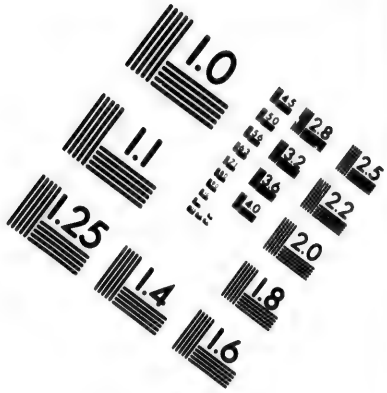

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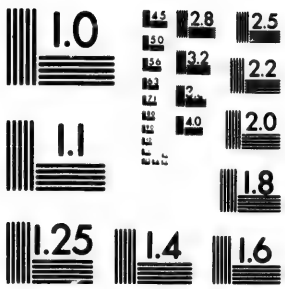

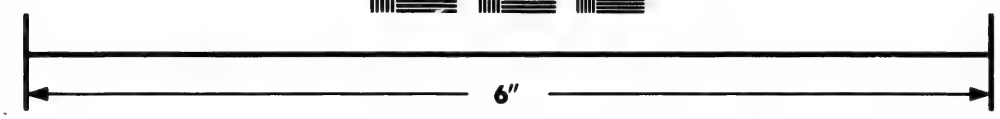

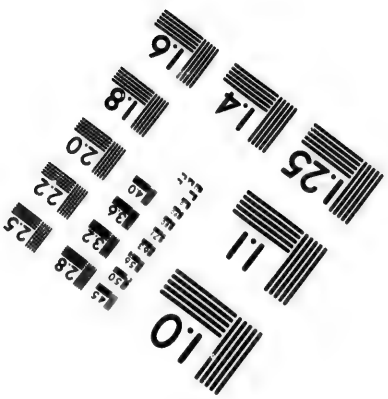

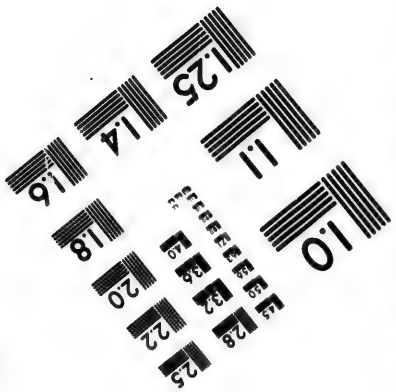

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whole *domain* of the cloister, while presiding over the recreation of his daughters. This statue, marking the sacred spot where for ten years reposed the mortal remains of the Blessed Mother St. Joseph, has special attractions for the inmates of the cloister, who never fail, in commencing their summer walk, to go and salute with an "*Ave, Joseph,*" the sweet and gracious image.

The following stanzas, stolen from the modest muse of the cloister, will doubtless remind some of our readers of the hours they themselves have spent within the precincts of a convent, sweet and touching memories of school-days long since past.

XXIV.

AVE, JOSEPH!

Ave, Joseph! fili David, justi
Vir Mariæ, di qua natus est Jesus!

I LOVE that "*Ave, Joseph!*" 'tis an old and hallow'd prayer,
And with it comes the voice of lakes, of hills, and valleys fair,—
Of rivers grandly flowing, of woodlands stretching wide,—
These mingle in that "*Ave,*" in one o'erwhelming tide!

'Twas heard amid the forests that mantled all the land,
Where trod the holy missioner, his crucifix in hand;
'Twas heard when Heaven the compact seal'd—
"Joseph, the guardian thou,
I ratify the choice New France has made by public vow!"

Oh! 'twas a thought with blessings rife in Joseph's hands to place
The youthful colony set down amid the Indian race;
Yes, 'twas a deed of wisdom, such patron high to gain—
Where Jesus reigns, and Mary pleads, Joseph prays not in vain.

Soon, hither bound, as sent by Heaven, when generous souls appear,
Fearless Brebœuf, I see thee, with thy martyr'd brethren near!
I see the Red Man sudden pause, and bless the sacred Rood,
And ranks of Saints rejoicing, ready to give their blood.

Ye hosts of fervent Christians, speak, and tell your deeds of love;
Tell us the secret of your strength—me thinks I hear ye say:
"Yes, ladies fair, who chose these wilds for sake of Him above,
'Twas Joseph lull'd the winds and waves, and cheer'd us on the way!"

XXV.

THE MYSTERIOUS HOSTS.

FATHER Jerome of Pistoia, a Capuchin, and Missionary Apostolic, was sent one day by the Sovereign Pontiff to Venice, where he was to embark for Candia, with a companion of his own order. Journeying on foot, like the Apostles, the two Fathers, wandering at the close of day, lost their way. Having walked on for some time without finding it again, they were obliged to stop, for they were exhausted with hunger and fatigue. Falling on their knees, invoking Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, the August Three, who are ever the protectors of travellers, having known their needs and experienced their dangers.

Prayer always brings happiness, and the two religious soon found that theirs was

heard, for they all at once perceived a light at a little distance. They arrived at a small house inhabited by a family of three persons, —an elderly man, a young woman, and a child. All in the house was so exquisitely neat and clean that it did one good to see it; and although the tools hung on the wall indicated the dwelling of a mechanic, there was something refined and distinguished, although extremely simple, in the manners and appearance of the head of the family. The features of the young woman were wonderfully sweet and fair to look upon; her voice was soft and melodious, and her mien was characterized by a mixture of candor, grace, and dignity. As for the child asleep in the cradle, one would have taken him for the heir of a throne. The travellers were received with such kind hospitality that their hearts were filled with the liveliest gratitude. A simple but plentiful meal was served to them; and, after returning thanks to Heaven, they slept a refreshing sleep, of which they were much in need.

Awaking next morning at the dawn of day, animated with the desire of renewing their thanks to their charitable entertainers, they were surprised to find themselves in the open fields, and to see no trace of the house wherein they had spent the night. They then perceived that the mysterious hosts whose hospitality they had received, were no other than the Holy Family itself. Humbling themselves profoundly, and admiring the divine goodness, they chanted a hymn of thanksgiving, and went on their way rejoicing, continually blessing the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

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XXVI.

AN EXTRAORDINARY VOCATION.

AMONGST the numerous monuments that strike the eye of the traveller who visits Montreal for the first time, there exists one which is at once remarkable for its site and its vast proportions. This magnificent establishment, popularly known as the Hotel Dieu, is seated on the slope of Mount Royal, and commands a view of the whole city. It is inhabited by a congregation of virgins, much devoted to the glorious Patriarch: hence the name of "Hospital Nuns of St. Joseph," which they took at the very beginning of their Institute. The reader must, however, bear in mind that this house was originally founded in the very heart

of the city, close by the ancient church of Notre Dame. There it was that, for over two centuries, the generous Daughters of St. Joseph carried on their work of charity and devotion. There, too, occurred the fact we are about to relate. We will give it as it is related in the history of this institution.

The record states that at the time when the Reverend Mother Céloron directed the house of the Hospital Nuns of St. Joseph, in Montreal, the Lord conducted to His Sanctuary, by most marvellous ways, a young American Protestant. Brought up in the bosom of heresy, and converted to Catholicity, she revived in that house the edifying example and the apostolic zeal formerly admired in Sister Silver. We speak of Miss Allen, daughter of the American officer, Ethan Allen, born in the State of Vermont. Her mother, Françoise Montrésor, having lost her heroic husband when her daughter was still very young, had married, as her second husband, Dr. Penniman. Miss Allen, endowed with a precocious and penetrating

mind, early applied herself to reading. But having only under her hand romances, or works written by Deists, she became an unbeliever, even before knowing religion. Nevertheless, the natural rectitude of her judgment made her suspect that the truth could not be found in such works, and she often had conferences with her mother, trying to discern the true from the false. Having heard people speak of Catholics, who were described to her in the most unfavorable colors, she wished to make a journey to Montreal, to see for herself whether what was said of them was true. She foresaw that her step-father, who was tenderly attached to her, would hardly consent to her going, in the fear that she might embrace the Catholic religion.

Without disclosing, then, the real motive of her journey, she gave as a reason her wish to learn the French language, and Dr. Penniman yielded to her entreaties. Nevertheless, before her departure, her parents insisted that she should receive baptism. She long resisted

their will; at length, to please her mother, she complied with their wishes. Being then an unbeliever, she did nothing but laugh during the ceremony, for which reason the Presbyterian minister, Mr. Barber, could not help giving her a severe reprimand. She was then about twenty-one.

In Montreal, she presented herself at the boarding-school of the Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady; and whatever inconvenience there might have been in admitting a young Protestant into that house, they willingly received her, hoping that while learning the French tongue, she would gain the still more precious knowledge of the true faith. She was soon remarked for a fixed adherence to her own opinions. It was only on the most indisputable proof that she adopted the views of others, and never concealed from her teachers her incredulity in matters of religion.

One day, one of the Sisters, by an impulse which must be attributed to Divine inspiration, asked Miss Allen if she would not take

to the altar where the Blessed Sacrament reposed, a vase of flowers which had been given her: at the same time, she recommended her to adore Our Lord on entering the sanctuary. The young lady went off laughing, resolved to do nothing of the kind. Having reached the railing, she opens the door, and suddenly feels herself stopped, and without power to go farther. Surprised at an obstruction so extraordinary, she makes three several attempts to go on; at length, struck and overcome, she falls on her knees, and, in the sincerity of her heart, adores Jesus Christ, of whose presence she is that very moment convinced. She immediately retires to the lower end of the church, where, bursting into tears, she says: "After such a miracle, I must give myself up to my Saviour."

Still, she said nothing to her teachers of what had occurred; only, she asked to be instructed, and soon after consented to go to confession. When sufficiently instructed, she made her solemn abjuration, and was baptised

by Mr. Le Saulnier, at that time Vicar of Montreal, her former baptism having been null by reason of the want of consent on her part. Finally, she made her first communion, and resolved, from that moment, to embrace the religious life.

Mr. and Mrs. Penniman, informed of the change, arrived in Montreal, very much displeased, and took their daughter home. There she spent six months, during which she had much to suffer, especially from her stepfather, who was bitterly opposed to the Catholic religion. Lent being come, she rigorously observed the fast and abstinence, and carried her austerities so far that she injured her health, naturally very delicate. Disregarding all family ties, she declared to her parents that she would embrace the religious life, and had made her final decision. Her mother, who loved her tenderly, and desired only her daughter's happiness, at length gave her consent, and accompanied her to Montreal in the following Spring.

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As yet, Miss Allen thought of no community in particular, her only desire being to consecrate herself to God by a religious life. With a view to know her vocation, she visited the churches of Ville-Marie, and amongst others that of the Hôtel Dieu. Scarcely had she cast her eyes on the picture over the high altar, representing the Holy Family, and fixed them on the face of St. Joseph, than she cried aloud to her mother:

"That is just his portrait. You see, my dear mother, St. Joseph wants me here. He it was who saved my life, by delivering me from the monster that was going to devour me."

She then reminded her mother of a memorable fact that had taken place when she was about twelve years old. Walking on the banks of a river, and turning her attention to the water, which was in violent motion, she saw coming up out of it a huge animal of monstrous form, who, coming towards her, made her terribly afraid. What increased

her terror was that it seemed as though she could not take her eyes from off this monster, and could not make even the slightest attempt to fly.

In this fearful emergency, she thought she perceived near her a bald old man, clad in a brown cloak, and with a staff in his hand, who took her by the arm and enabled her to move, saying: "Little girl, what dost thou here? Fly." Which she quickly did. When a little way off, she turned to look at the old man, but there was nothing to be seen. As soon as she reached home, her mother, seeing her so scared and bewildered, understood that something unusual had occurred to her. The child related, as well as she could, the cause of her fright, and the assistance she had received from the unknown old man. Her mother immediately sent a servant in search of the old man, in order to testify her gratitude. After a most diligent search, no traces of him being found, no one ever knew what had become of him.

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Recognizing, then, in the features of St. Joseph, in the picture of the Holy Family, the face of that old man, to whom she owed her life, Miss Allen felt herself more confirmed than ever in her wish to embrace the religious life, and was convinced that she was to become a daughter of St. Joseph. It matters little whether that monster and that old man showed themselves to her in a real and corporal manner, or whether that sight was but an impression made on her mind. In whatever way it had occurred, Miss Allen remained convinced that the old man had preserved her from death, and the remembrance of his features was so stamped on her mind, that, as we have said, thirteen years after, when she cast her eyes upon the picture in the Hôtel Dieu, she was struck with the identity of that face and that costume, and could not help expressing her surprise aloud. That animal, whose approach she could not fly, and who was ready to devour her, was, doubtless, a figure of the still more cruel monster of

heresy and unbelief, from which St. Joseph delivered her, to lead her to the house of his Institute as a safe refuge.

Some months later, Miss Allen entered the novitiate of the daughters of St. Joseph. Till her death, which took place in the eleventh year after her entering into religion, she justified, by her zeal, her regularity, and all other Christian virtues, the hopes which the community had conceived of her after such a vocation.

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XXVII.

THE LITTLE CABIN-BOY.

A FRIGATE, homeward bound from China, was already nearing the French coast. Although the night was advanced, and the sea running high, gaiety prevailed on board.

A cabin-boy, amongst others, was amusing the crew by various unsuccessful attempts to catch a little bird that seemed to have come, less to seek an asylum in the ship's rigging, than to play his part in the acrobatic exercises of the little cabin-boy. At times he even seemed fatigued, and hopped singing on to a yard, waiting, almost asleep, till the urchin, climbing like a cat, and suspending himself like a monkey, had got within some paces of him. And when the cabin-boy

reached out his arm to seize him, the mischievous little bird took wing, and went to perch farther away.

The captain was walking on his poop alone, smiling, between whiles, unnoticed by the others, at this trial of agility between the child and the bird. It seemed as though he took an interest in what was going on.

The cabin-boy, in one of his feats, had climbed to the highest yard of the main-mast. He was clinging by one hand to a rope, when the frigate gave a sudden lurch, his feet slid off the slippery yard, and he hung poised in the air; then let go his hold, fell on the netting, rebounded like a ball, and was thrown into the sea.

A cry resounded through the vessel.

The captain, beside himself, runs to his cabin, throws himself on his knees, his head in his hands, and begins to sob aloud.

He was a father to his crew, and at the same time a man full of faith—of old French faith. All at once he starts up. Two steps,

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e starts up. Two steps,

and he is before an image of *St. Joseph*, which he had placed in a little framed niche, at the entrance of his dressing-room. He opens the door which conceals it from stranger eyes.

"St. Joseph!" he cries, with tearful eyes and hands stretched towards the image, "St. Joseph, they say you are so powerful. . . . Well, if you save this child, I promise you that—you shall be pleased with me!"

The brave and worthy captain, notwithstanding his sailor-like devotion, knew not well how to put his promise in words. He sits down, his head still in his hands:—

"Poor child! poor child!—and his mother!" And he continued to weep like a real father.

More than a quarter of an hour passed thus. Some one knocks at the door: it is the lieutenant.

"Commander," said he, "I hope they will save him!"

"What do you say? Who?"

"The little cabin-boy. They are trying to fish him up again."

The commander starts up, almost in a passion.

"Unhappy that you are! You don't think of it!—with that sea, and in darkness! One misfortune is enough, without making five or six more."

"Have no fear, commander."

"I don't want—do you hear?—I don't want—poor child!"

"But, commander, ——"

"There is no *but!*—I don't want—poor mother!"

"Commander, it is already done!"

"What?"

"Well, commander, whilst they were getting out a boat with five men in it, life-preservers were thrown out, and—hold! I'm sure they will bring him up!" And without waiting for an answer, the lieutenant goes out.

"You are mad!—poor child!" says the captain, beginning to pace his cabin to and fro.

"Oh, St. Joseph!—if you will only save him! ——"

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He was going to hasten after the lieutenant, when the latter returns, his face beaming with joy.

"Saved! commander, saved!"

"Come, no jesting!"

"No, commander; all the men are aboard, and they have brought him up!"

"What's to be done? They must throw him in again!—yet, no—stay, we will give him to his mother. Poor woman!—Oh! what need had he of climbing so high!"

"Commander, if they give him to his mother, they will give him alive! The doctor says it is nothing."

"It is nothing! How you do go on!"

"The doctor has made him throw up the water he had swallowed, and he says there is nothing serious. The coldness of the water prevented the cerebral congestion that his fall would have produced, and he was able to take hold himself of the cord that was thrown to him. He is almost quite conscious now. To-morrow he will be on his feet."

"That is easily said. We shall see."

"Come and see now, commander!"

It was true enough. And the next day the cabin-boy was on his feet, and able to land and go to see his mother.

"Boys," said the commander to his men, "if the cabin-boy owes the *Good Mother* a big taper, I owe *St. Joseph*—faith! I don't know what—but I told him *he should be pleased with me!* . . . Boys, I have only this to tell you: St. Joseph is the first of all the Saints. It is to him that we must have recourse. We must believe that the good God gave him his power, that he might save our poor little cabin-boy. So now let it be understood that St. Joseph is patron of the ship. To-morrow let us all go to Mass. . . . I will offer a golden heart in the name of the whole crew."

"Your pardon, commander," broke in the lieutenant, "if you allow us, we will all contribute for that purpose. What say you, friends?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

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"Well, as you all wish it, let us offer the heart together! I will see to the rest." (The *rest* was a pair of magnificent chandeliers for St. Joseph's altar, in the church of ——).

"Come, boys, St. Joseph for ever!"

"St. Joseph for ever!—Long live the commander!" shouted the three hundred men who formed the crew of the frigate.

XXVIII.

THE PEARL LOST AND FOUND.

I.

THE weather has been fine during the Feast of the Azymes, which has just taken place. The families of pilgrims are leaving Jerusalem, each one hastening to take their homeward way. On the road to Galilee there is a crowd of people, like an army compressed into a mountain gorge. These are the people from the seashore, and the banks of the Jordan, and from Naim, and Cana, and Capharnaum, who, dwelling in the same district, group together for the homeward journey. If the night must be passed on the road, if any unlooked-for occurrence takes place, it will be more convenient for all to travel in company.

VIII.

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The beauty of the spring was already abroad on the land; the fig-tree was in bud and blossom; almond and date-trees flourished here and there; the scent of rosemary was wafted on the air, and the warbling of birds was heard on every side. And man, too, is changed in the spring-time; his heart seems more pious, more disposed to the love of God.

As far as the eye can reach that fair April day, groups are to be seen journeying along, full of gaiety and glee. Of a sudden the old men commence aloud: "Alleluia! blessed be Thou, O God of Abraham!" Farther on, maid and matron repeat the prayer, word by word, in their hearts, and, although thoughts vary according to the diversity of characters, nevertheless, woman, notwithstanding her weakness, is more apt to praise God, for she loves more. Men of mature age talk over the gossip of the day, animadvert on their governor, the rapacious Roman, and curse those uninvited guests. The young men ap-

plaud, and, with light hearts, sing and chat about the young girls. The children, oh! the children laugh merrily, and skim around like swallows. Here and there the asses under their charge bray in the meadows, as if in answer.

So the tedium of the road is beguiled: a league, two leagues, are soon passed. By nightfall they have journeyed several leagues. A grove of olive-trees appears just in time to give a shelter for the night; water is not wanting, for a fresh, limpid stream winds along the outskirt of the wood.

The tribe at length pitches its tents. Each family busies itself preparing the evening meal. Wallets are emptied of their remaining contents; some slices of cooked lamb and bread, some dried fish—more than enough for the simple meal. The people are not hard to please; at home or abroad, they are content with little. Some vegetables, a fig or two, a virtuous companion—that is quite enough for a journey.

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The young people run right and left, some near, some far, to fetch water and wood; some go to the neighboring cottages to seek salt and vessels, and the women are all at work preparing the meal. People thereabouts are very hospitable; flocks are grazing all around, and the children jump with joy around the camp-fires, for they are sure of having milk. Meanwhile, night approaches and silence begins to prevail; the weary birds drop into their nests, and nature reposes in twilight calm.

II.

Here and there a star appeared, and soon the calm, azure vault was full of glittering lights, like a shoal of little fish, with golden scales, bathing in the calm, limpid ether. The frugal supper was soon ended; night spread its gloomy curtain over all; the rustling of the trees and the hum of human voices ascend together in prayer to Him who, in the inaccessible heights of His eternal

dwelling-place, worketh so many marvels. He seems to praise Himself in His works before our world, that men may love and revere Him.

After the moon, then at the full, had set, the night was dark and still, deliciously mild and balmy, disposing to sleep. And the pilgrims slept, although here and there might still be heard, at times, some sighs of sorrow. Some watchers there were, who, considering face to face the ineffable mysteries, held communion with the unseen world beneath that dazzling dome of gold and jewels. Oh! the child, by his faith; the virgin, by her love; the old man, by his hope, tend unceasingly towards their Father, and raise their weeping eyes to heaven; sleep does not so soon weigh down their eyelids.

Suddenly a noise resounds through the wood; a wailing voice and a clapping of hands are confusedly heard. Louder and more distinctly comes the sound to the ear, and soon it awakens all the echoes of the hills. Those

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who are still awake first raise their heads and listen: they are seeking some one who is lost; the sweet accents of a touchingly mournful voice are heard unceasingly.

"It is our Mary," said the Nazarenes, "our holy, our beloved sister, Mary. Alas! it is too true; her Child has not once been seen since the journey began. Poor Mary! how acute must be her sufferings!" And they all hasten towards her, through the thickly-falling dew. At the same time the name of Jesus, "O Jesus! Jesus!" is everywhere heard, and all over the so-lately slumbering camp that sweet name is being repeated.

The entire tribe is in motion; the heaviest sleepers waking with a start, are, in their turn, deeply touched by the misfortune of their neighbor. The old men, as usual, indulge in recollection.

"Yea, blessed," they say, "were that family —Joseph, Mary, and the Child Jesus! This triple branch of the house of David flourished visibly before our eyes, smelling sweetly before

the Lord. And Jehovah is their protector. Our eyes have seen miracles. And do not the prophecies say that in Bethlehem was to be born that herald, that Messiah of God, for His people Israel? And was not Jesus born in Bethlehem? And that beautiful star that was seen above His crib! And those wise men, those kings from far countries! Was ever such sweetness seen in a child's eyes as there is in those of Jesus? And His face, why it is like unto that of a holy prophet! Truly, in all this God conceals something extraordinary. As to Joseph, ye know he is our old friend; but this Mary, she truly looks a queen."

A strong, but broken voice now re-echoes through the wood. It is undoubtedly Joseph, worn out with fatigue, calling to his spouse, and advising her to seek repose. Very soon the noise of the search dies away, and all is again silent. Far away from the sleeping crowd might be heard the voice of mourning, and words of consolation.

"Peace be with thee, Mary!" one was heard

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to say. "Wherefore dost thou weep thus? No harm hath befallen, nor can befall, the Child. The hairs of our heads are numbered, how much His steps, which Angels guard. If I am His guardian, and thou His mother, it is only by a special favor of the Almighty. To the end that His holy will may be done, He is pleased to make us the servants of His Son. What harm hath Herod, with all his power, been able to do Him? Calm thy fears, then, O young and too tender mother! The Child cannot be far off. Perchance, He may be enjoying His wonted delight in solitary prayer, somewhere in the desert. To-morrow thou wilt forget what hath to-day caused thee so much suffering, and we shall easily find Him, perhaps even in the city."

The counsels of Joseph were wise; but where is the mother that can overcome her emotions?—whose heart does not sink within her at the bare possibility of danger to her child? Mary, too, must have her disquietude; she must be accustomed to the trials and troubles

of a mother. It may be that even now a sad foreboding strikes her soul from afar, warning her of what she is one day to endure.

And she wept burning tears. All heaven compassionated her sorrow The Archangels of the heavenly court were sent to wait upon their immaculate Queen. With their own hands they supported the couch on which her head rested. They gently closed her moistened eyelids, and soothed her to sleep. That radiant, but silent court, motioned the earth to silence, and the earth was still. It dared not disturb the sleeper, even by a breath.

III.

All was dark and silent; but, through the darkness and the silence, the lights of the firmament rolled on and on in their appointed course. The Lord himself regulates and watches over their motions. He folds and re-folds worlds at will, like so many leaves. The moon was about to set behind the mountains, resting on the rocky ramparts, and shed-

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ding its drowsy light here and there. Eastward the vault of heaven spreads its rosy curtains right and left. The stars are paling; the fair fresh dawn appears all radiant at her window, pouring forth her first cheering rays, resting lovingly on the brow and eyelids of Mary; and, like a twin sister from a heavenly couch, greets her with a fond embrace.

The Blessed Virgin, that morning dawn of our earth, at length opens her eyes. Oh! how fair and fresh was she! The brightness of her face was still clearer and more cheering even than that of the dawn. It must have been a delicious dream that charmed away her sorrow and trouble of the evening previous; a sweet smile plays around her lips.

"Arise, Joseph!" she graciously said; "it is time to set out. He is in Jerusalem. Yesterday I troubled thee with my complaints; I was beside myself, and I was wrong, but truly I could not help it."

At either extremity of the vast azure distance was the sun rising and the moon setting,

the reflected light of each meeting in mid-heaven, and forming a glorious arch. The firmament appeared, as it were, thrown open. The stars retired into the blue depths. The woods were sleeping, and the kneeling hills were seen more and more distinctly in their forms and colors, in that matinal splendor. From time to time was heard the distant cheery call of chanticleer, awaking the slumbering earth to renewed life.

IV.

Joseph and Mary, journeying on, had already ascended the third hill. The ass moved briskly in the freshness of the morning, bearing his burden lightly. The air was everywhere instinct with life: birds were chanting their matin song in the solemn and holy hour. Like a king from his couch rose the sun, throwing aside his curtains of crimson and gold. Louder and higher rose the song of the birds. The flowers gave forth more freely their fragrant perfumes. And

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man, likewise, yielded a more fervent devotion to his Maker in that pure, fresh morning hour. Every voice was raised in prayer for the daily bread.

Joseph and Mary sang by turns, joining, with heart and voice, in that terrestrial chorus of praise. They, at the same time, hurried on towards the city. Now a few pilgrims, now many, met them on their way, and all appeared to be from Nazareth, for still the greeting was: "Hail, Joseph! hail, Mary!"

The day was long; but even on the road the prayerful soul, like a dove on the wing, is not easily fatigued. So the holy couple went on, by turns repeating the psalms that came into their mind, and thinking of their holy ward. The different objects along the road were quickly left behind, and the suburbs of the city were at length gained. The city gates are passed; the noise of the street is already heard. Joseph lays down beforehand the plan of the search: "Well, Mary,"

said he, "we shall repair to the house of Zachary, where we are accustomed to stay. There we shall have rest and refreshment. Then we shall go in search of the Child. We must endeavor to leave the city this evening before the gates are closed."

The ass, heated and panting, brays loudly as they approach the well-known abode: he, too, needs rest. So Joseph first attends to his wants, providing him with hay and oats.

Mary has already knocked at the door: "Peace to the house," she sweetly said; "peace to my beloved in God!" "Hosannah!" replied a voice from the adjoining chamber. It is the aged Elisabeth who so cordially returns her greeting. She quits her work, her eyes sparkling with joy, for her heart tells her who the new-comers are. In her humility, she does not dare to kiss Mary's cheek; but, as her servant, she kisses the fold of her garment. Mary embraces her tenderly. Joseph soon appears, and all three

rejoice with the purest joy, the joy which is only known to holy souls. Oh, how sweet a peace reigned there!

V.

Elizabeth first bows down before the Mother, and then whispers some details about her Son. Mary's face, but lately so sad, brightens with joy. She says, in a low voice; "He is, then, in the Temple, or at the house of Veronica? Ever amongst the learned He is sure to be." Elizabeth continued: "My dwelling is empty and silent; my old husband is, since yesterday, in Jericho. My John is as a stranger. All my efforts are vain. I know not whither he goeth. His childhood is passed in the desert, in fasting and in prayer. Oh! my dearest friends, what things he speaks of the shame and ignominy of men! And he is the precursor of Him who cometh. Oh! yes, He cometh, He cometh, that Saviour of the world; a breath from on High seems to announce it; we inhale it, like

incense, into our bosoms. The Lord, the Redeemer, is even now almost in our midst. (Mary greedily drank in these words.) Jesus, thy Jesus, is, indeed, my Lord. The hardened souls of the Pharisees are already softened, and begin to feel compunction. Yea, they will give glory to the Almighty, although, as yet, Jesus appeareth but as an unfledged bird."

Mary listened attentively and with motherly interest. Her heart and soul were moved. She raised her eyes and her hands, and, falling on her knees, murmured these words of grace: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden. Behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed."

Elizabeth and Joseph, seraph-like, joined in these praises with heart and voice: "He that is mighty hath done great things. His mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear Him. He hath showed strength

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with His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble."

The triple harmony resounded like the music of a lyre, bringing back again the ancient and splendid prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

VI.

The sun had well nigh reached his meridian height. The great square of the city was full of people discoursing together. The motley crowd rolled away noiselessly, hither and thither, like the waves of the sea when tossed by the wind. The poor went to their daily toil, the idle to their frivolous amusements. Each one spoke of what concerned himself.

Now was heard one thing, now another; now a joyous word, now a sad one, according to the mood of the several speakers: "To-day our governor gives his festival.

They say it will be more splendid even than in Rome."

A building of vast proportions, and of wondrous beauty, strikes the eye, astonishing all strangers by its magnificent colonnades. It is the Temple, the House of God; it is the thought of Solomon the Wise converted into stone, and shining out for generations. On a nearer view, the majestic proportions of the great edifice are lost sight of in the chiselled leaves and flowers, intertwining, like a transparent texture, light as the wind, like unto the veil of some chaste daughter of kings. All along the steps and in the porch are seen pillars, flowers, and divers sweet-smelling herbs. The stalls and booths are full of toys and dainties.

The air is mild. Children and young people linger around, feasting their eyes on the tempting wares, the venders of which rejoice in the hope of gain. Youth, ah! youth rejoices even now; it hovers, like a swarm of bees around its hive, and, humming its sense-

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less song, drowns with its voice the glad tidings that run from mouth to mouth amongst the people.

Amongst the Doctors a Child is found; and the Doctors themselves are amazed at His knowledge. He discourses of God with more zeal and more confidence than ever did the Masters themselves, and a thousand times better than any amongst them. A couple pass unnoticed, and make their way through the crowd in the vestibule. One is an aged man, with a snowy beard, tall in stature, and of grave demeanor. By his side is a woman of the rarest beauty, of medium size, modest, delicate, virginal. Now and then, beneath the folds of her veil, her features and her dove-like eyes are caught sight of. It is Joseph and Mary.

VII.

Like the tinkling of a small silver bell was heard the voice of a child, echoing faint but clear beneath those gigantic white arches.

This dove-like voice, sweet and gracious, makes itself heard by that other dove, the soul, speaking to it of merciful hopes. Anxious that their Heavenly Guest should not be disturbed, people make frequent signs to each other to keep silence. Hearts frozen by old hatreds are melted by the rays of this new grace-giving sun. Here and there contrite souls fall on their knees. A deep and solemn silence reigns. On the women's side, the Virgin, full of grace, with tearful eyes and light step, advances farther into the Temple.

Before the Ark, in which are kept the Ten Commandments, flickers a cheering flame, by the rays of the sun made like to a peacock's tail. There the amazed Doctors are seated, in a semi-circle. On a carpeted elevation stands the Child, clad in a blue tunic. He speaks slowly; pauses from time to time; at every pause the crowd breaks forth into loud acclamations; all eyes are fixed on the face of the Child, where the shade of thought seems to rest like a light cloud, and many an admiring

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At length, making a sign with His hand, He resumes; but what language can convey His words? Oh! all Eternity cannot embrace their import! "In the beginning," said He, "was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God." He continued, with a stronger voice: "This Word was the light and the life; and this Word was made flesh. But men have not known the Incarnate."

Thus spoke He, prodigy after prodigy, not in the dignity of a doctor commenting on Scripture, but in the plenitude of power from on High, as Master and as Lord, before whom, in the twinkling of an eye, heaven and earth must fall in adoration. And to make Himself more intelligible to the simple, He unfolded a luminous and transparent tissue of parables, which, like the surface of water, veil all the secret places of our soul. Truly it is seen by the expressive gestures of the multitude that the truth is sinking deep into their minds.

The old Doctors rack their brains to explain the meaning of these heaven-breathing parables: they discuss amongst themselves. Each one is moved according to the humility with which he is penetrated, or the pride of priestly learning that puffs him up. "Let us try if we cannot argue him down," say they. But Jesus ends soon with a prayer, which He offers up alike for the learned and the unlearned.

The Child, leaving His place, had only a sweet smile on His lips. Suddenly He meets His Mother's anxious eye amongst the crowd, and, like a fish to the line, He bounds towards her. Joseph, in heart, blamed Him not; but the Mother, true to her Mother's nature, said to Him: "Why hast Thou done so to us? We have sought Thee, sorrowing."

"Mother, beloved Mother, soul of my soul! have I not made known to thine that I must look after the business of my Father?"

This reason was sufficient for the fond Mother.

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VIII.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went forth from the Temple hand in hand: the rumor followed them everywhere. Young and old whispered: "Lo! here He comes! Yea, it is He! It is the Prophet who cometh from the Lord, His wonderful Preacher!" Stirred by the spiritual teaching they had just heard, all those of the crowd who were humble in heart kissed the folds of the Son's and the Mother's garments. The virgins offered fragrant flowers. Jesus accepted and saluted His people with a motion of His hand. In the far-stretching shadow of the tower, and near the steps, a group of men was continually increasing. They kept asking each other: "Who or what is He?" "Whence cometh He?" "What! that Child from the neighborhood of Nazareth? Impossible! Who ever heard of a prophet appearing in Nazareth? Yea, yea, Simeon,—yea, Nathaniel! From the tax-office and from your fishing-barks many will follow

Him," said Levi, Cæsar's publican. The grain seemed to take root in good soil.

Jesus, His Mother, and their guardian, as yet in sight, gradually disappeared, as does the bow in the clouds. All was silent and vacant where lately was the bustling crowd. The old betook themselves to the windows of their houses, for it was the day of an imperial festival. The young seemed to be attracted outside the city. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph walked slowly towards the dwelling of Elizabeth. They were already approaching her cottage, distinguished by its whiteness; from its chimney a column of smoke was ascending. The court in front was covered with fresh green sward; the paths were smooth and clean; and the vestibule matted. The aged Elizabeth, gracious hostess that she was, stood at the door, surrounded by her kinsfolk, awaiting her guests.

Jesus, as soon as He caught sight of them, joyfully saluted Elizabeth, together with Veronica, Martha, and Salome. Having reached

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the door, He tenderly embraces His young relatives. He is caressed by all as a fair and winning child; His Mother, too, is warmly and kindly greeted, with the honor due to her exalted dignity. The venerable Joseph likewise receives his share of honor. The guests at length enter the house, the interior of which is handsomely and tastefully adorned. The table is already set, and abundantly furnished with refreshments. The snow-white linen bears witness to the excellent housewifery of Elizabeth. The sunlight streaming in through several windows, gild the modest furniture. Freshness, grace, beauty, and gayety reign in the favored dwelling: flowers are there in profusion. The Child Jesus likes the flowers much: He enjoys the sweetness of their perfume; the variety of their colors pleases Him. So He chooses some of the loveliest, wreathes a virginal crown, and whispering to His Mother: "Thou shalt be well crowned," He places it on her brow. A blush, like the first faint crimson of the dawn, suffuses the fair face of

Mary, hearing these words, and receiving the caresses of her Child.

IX.

Crowned thus, as Queen and Mother, she takes the first place at table, beside her Son and her beloved. The other guests remain standing, lower down, waiting till the gifts of God are blessed by the aged Joseph. Oh! the age and sanctity of a man find as much favor on High as priesthood. Joseph, therefore, repeated the usual prayer for a blessing on the gifts. Jesus, in the capacity of Sacrificer, broke the bread and blessed it; and Veronica handed it round to the guests. The aged Elizabeth superintended all, and saw that each of her guests was duly cared for.

The meats were simple, but well seasoned and palatable. It must be understood that Jesus prohibited His own kinsfolk from abstaining from flesh, wishing that all should rejoice while He was on earth. The table abounded with good things: a lamb, pigeons,

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IX.

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dried fruits. There was also a little wine for refreshment; but the guests took only just what nourishment the body required, in order to obey the dictates of the soul.

Another festival engaged their attention; yes, another, and it was not of this world. All the guests listened intently to the words of the Child, and relished them as the celestial bread—as food that could satisfy the hunger of their souls for all eternity. Thus did Jesus scatter seed abundantly in good soil. With a prophetic eye He glanced through the abyss of time, and in a whisper questioned Martha on the chalice.

He then spoke of the holy mysteries of that chalice, saying that He was given to men to make the offering, and that He would still make it according to the New Law. He also gave some explanations as to Melchisedeck: "It was the Angel of the Lord, who, in old times, went about the earth, under a human form, everywhere teaching men to praise and glorify God. Little by little the nations have

turned away from the truth: they soon worship the golden calf. Nevertheless, some drops of this living water yet remain here and there, at times purer than that of the Temple. These drops shall grow still larger, and spread into a living spring, for the Son of God takes the human form, and is made flesh."

The face of the Child, as the Emmanuel so long desired, beamed with all its splendor; scarce could mortal eye endure the sight. So, with heads bowed low, they chanted: "Hosannah! glory! glory! glory to God throughout all eternity!" Their hearts were ravished with a mysterious wonder. The miracles they saw before them appeared like a dream. Passing fair was that vision of Paradise.

Smiling, then, as a beloved and loving child, Jesus changes His divine countenance into that of a mere mortal. He admonishes and then consoles His female hearers, but does not forbid them innocent joys. At length, Joseph announces the hour of departure; but the hosts, full of affection for their

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X.

The city breaks forth into rejoicing. Terpsichore everywhere proclaims the Emperor's festival. A joyous tumult reigns amongst the richly-attired, many-colored crowd. The arms and armor of the Roman soldiery glittered wherever the eye could reach. A swarm of profligate, effeminate-looking patricians strut along in the lion skins they wear on their shoulders. Pagans and Jewish lords, covered with gold and pearls, follow, step by step, on horseback, in full state. Bread and fine sights are gratuitously and in profusion given to the people. Dust and noise there are in abundance.

The Jupiter of Rome is known to be lavish of his gifts. Joy, in a word; and what joy! . . . But the soul! Oh! the soul knows not whether it exists. The shade of Tiberius is still abroad on the earth: that dark phantom,

crowned with imperial laurels, scourges unceasingly with both hands: while one rains rods, from the other falls the axe. The governor, that true Roman courtier of that day, that monster of cruelty, is known as Publius. Ask twenty years hence, and no one will be able to tell you what was the great man's name.

The divine group, pressed on its way by the crowd, glides timidly hither and thither, like birds in a storm. They try to get away. They hear only the noise of the pagan festival, surging louder and louder amongst the crowd. One relates the exploits of a gladiator: "With one blow of his fist he felled a bull." "And killed him?" "Yea, he killed him;" and the answer was repeated on every side. "What gigantic strength have these people from the Euxine!" And no one deigns to cast a look on the Child to whom all nations are subject, and the footstool of whose glory is the whole earth.

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ron winds along, in its

brightness, through the meadows; nearer, a smooth pond lies, glittering in the sunlight. White flocks are grazing on its banks, and many prattling children are there washing their lambs. Sportive maidens and gay young brides cast their garlands into the bright water, singing glad songs the while. Laughing and chatting, they run hither and thither, chasing each other in girlish glee.

XI.

Jesus proposes to halt here, for, soon, the friends will have to part company, and the travellers proceed alone on their journey. The aspect of the place pleases Him, for all around breathes of the country. Scarcely are the holy group seated on the sward, when, a boy here, a girl there, is seen to approach, like the sparrows, beginning with the boldest, one following the other; and soon there may be seen a crowd of children, who, ever easily put to flight, now stand motionless around. Jesus caresses them with His hands.

Surprise is painted on every face. Jesus seems to them an old acquaintance; somewhere, not long since, they thought they had fluttered with Him over flowers.

A little farther away, a young servant-maid was trying in vain to soothe the child she carried in her arms; do what she would, she could not succeed. "Be silent, oh! be silent, my little Stephen," she kept repeating; but the child would not be pacified. Suddenly the little hand of Jesus is laid on its head. Stephen stretches his arms towards Him; he twines his tiny fingers in His waving hair, and clings to His neck, like a bird under its mother's wings. Jesus kisses the little one tenderly. And it is for that kiss—yea, even for that kiss—that Stephen shall one day shed his blood, and be the first to open the way for the martyrs.

This scene of marvellous love touched all beholders. The aged friends of the travellers took their leave of them. And Joseph's ass trotted briskly on. Jesus and Mary were

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mounted together on another. They waved a parting salute to the kind friends they left behind, and set forward on the road to Galilee. Jesus cast His eyes far along the road, as a messenger of glad tidings. His thoughts were in heaven above. All at once, as if some one had pulled Him by a fold of His garment, He turned His animated eyes to the right. There lies the silent Garden of Olives, the gloomy Golgotha! Thence it is that the world's redemption by the cross shall come. At the idea of the cross, Jesus bows humbly before the will of His Father. His tears, like dew, moisten the earth. But soon, with His usual calmness, He raises His head heavenward. In the mirror of His eyes many thoughts are reflected.

XII.

"Mother," He said, "in an evil manner do men spend the days of their pilgrimage here below. They surround themselves with trouble and with weariness; and yet miracles are

strewn all along their way, but they deign not to cast a look upon them. They will not consider who it is that clothes this tree with verdure; who it is that hath given the birds their many-colored plumage, and provideth for them food. Verily, these sportive birds sow not, neither do they reap. Behold, fairest Mother, the lily, white as the snow! With what majesty it raiseth its head, even from the vile dust of the earth, out of which it groweth! Neither Solomon in all his glory, nor the spouse of any king, hath been so splendidly adorned. And yet it is but a flower; fair though it be to look upon, it is only perishable dust. Man alone, by his soul or spirit, weighs something in the balance before the Divine Spirit. He alone is surrounded by a very special care and protection. But he himself extinguishes the spark of light within him. He allows his reason and his heart to be carried away by his will. By his unbridled wickedness he heaps up, from day to day, sin on sin, and liveth in the darkness of his evil ways.

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Hence it is that the Heavenly Father hath cast him off for ever. Nevertheless, there are yet promises; there are all-powerful remedies: the blood of the Innocent One." His voice was choked with sobs. A long silence followed.

Jesus began anew: "Mother, thou art a star amongst the elect; surrounded by the court of my angels, thou shalt shed light upon this world, as the sole mediatrix of divine grace. The depths shall rejoice with the rays of thy glory."

Long they remained clasped in a sweet but mute embrace. The prophetic words are again heard. The holy Mother gathers them in with delight, and hides them deep down in her heart. The long journey seemed to her but as a moment's length.

The sun was now declining, and several leagues were already traversed. An olive grove is seen not far off, with a clear stream running close by; and there the Holy Family stop for the night. The sun is setting behind crimson clouds, but he yet gilds Mount Thabor

and the neighboring hill-tops with his roseate beams. The castle of Magdala is seen, with added splendor, in that flood of fiery light which overspreads the landscape, its bright hues made richer still by the gorgeous crimson of the far-famed vines of the country. Rising from amid those clustering vines a lofty palm-tree casts its shadow far down athwart the plain, and from forth their sheltering leaves the young Samaritan girl slowly and timidly moves away with her lamb; she dares not cast a look behind, for she is accursed in Israel. An old, old feud, dating from the times of the Babylonish captivity, but existing yet in all its ancient strength and bitterness!

Jesus followed the fugitive with His eyes. He pondered deeply in His heart. At length He opens His mouth, and proclaims that love of the new law, that love abounding in the purest delight, which, from the highest heaven, is to descend as a magic chain to our clouded earth, and bind together all mankind, reconciled with God, its Creator.

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"Ah! yonder Samaritan," said He, "is poor Humanity, burning inwardly from father to son, and suffering under the weight of that ancient condemnation. But it shall arise again; yea, it shall arise in love, in faith, in hope, for the time is at hand when the new covenant shall embrace all eternity.".

The silver-haired guardian of Jesus, revived by the dews of grace falling from the divine lips of his foster-Son, listened with delight, moved even to tears. Filled with compunction, he bows his head on his knees; Jesus, in a low voice, repeats to him the heavenly promise: "Resting on Me thou shalt be the guardian of souls, and in thy name I will multiply thee in the new covenant."

The night came on, with its shades and its silence. Here and there a star was seen in the blue expanse of heaven. The Holy Family fall on their knees, and Jesus begins in a clear, sweet voice: "Our Father, who art in Heaven, . . ." He prayed for His beloved, and for Himself. When, at length, the Holy

Family slept, bright peaceful dreams hovered around, reflecting their mysteries. The stars come out by thousands. The guardian sun and the guardian moon are absent, keeping their watch far away in another hemisphere. The whole firmament, rolling on in its unending motion, appears to sing in ceaseless harmony: "Blessed for ever be Thou, O Son of Man!"

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XXIX.

SCENES IN NAZARETH.

"DEAR spouse, it is late, and our evening repast
Is not ready, nor have I a morsel of bread;
This morning I gave our sweet Jesus the last,
And He may be hungry—'tis that which I dread."

Thus speaks gentle Mary, and Joseph, who hears,
To heaven looks up with his calm, trusting eyes:
"Help will come to us, Mary, have thou no fears,
Our God will provide for His Son in some wise.

"See, here is some work, I am finishing now—
A box I have fashion'd with all my best skill;
It is for the lord of yon palace below,
That rises so grand at the foot of the hill.

"In less than an hour the work will be done,—
Our dear Jesus shall carry it home, and be paid;
Then you shall have bread for your well-beloved Son,
And Heaven will thus send us help, as I've said."

To his hard, ceaseless toil, with fresh courage he goes,
Nor heeds the big drops from his hot brow that fall,—
What are labor and sweat when the laborer knows
He is working to nourish the Saviour of all?

The work being finish'd, said Joseph: "My Son,
Wilt Thou carry this box to the castle down there?"
Yea, and, Joseph, thy hard, patient labor hath won
Such guerdon as never hath fall'n to the share!

At the door of the mansion the Saviour now stands,
Full humbly he knocks in the portal's deep shade;
"What brings thee, Child, hither?" a menial demands:
"Lo! this box for thy master my father hath made."

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Quoth the lackey, in scorn : "Small chance hast
thou now
Of seeing my master—to-morrow come back."
"I will wait," said young Jesus, a cloud on His brow ;
Full well the Child knows what His dear parents
lack.

All trembling He lingers, in hope and in fear :
At length comes the master : "This work is well
done ;
It must needs please my lady, my Miriam dear—
I will soon see thy father, if thou'rt Joseph's son."

A blush overspreads the fair face of the Child,—
Not from shame or from pride, He is humble of
heart ;
But He thinks of His parents—in words sweet and
mild,
He asks to receive of the payment a part.

Cried the master, in anger, "Go, get thee away!
With low people like these, their work is scarce
done,
When, forsooth, thou art call'd on the very same day,
To pay what thou owest before set of sun!"

Then Jesus, all sorrowful, turns from the door,
And thinks how His parents must go without bread—
When lo! gentle Miriam, stepping before,
With a pitying smile, lays her hand on His head.

"O blame not my husband," she said, "gentle Child;
His cares they are many—to-morrow, thou'lt see,
He will pay thee the better," and sweetly she smiled,
"For the words that are now so displeasing to thee.

"Meanwhile, I pray thee this bauble to take—
'Tis a ring which thy father may sell in the town;
The help it will bring thee I give for thy sake,
I would not, dear Child, send thee home with a frown."

The lady was gone, and the beautiful Child
Stood musing a moment; what thoughts had He then?
Ah! gracious they were, for he looked up and smiled,—
There were mercy and goodness still found amongst men!

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To His parents He quickly the jewel convey'd—
"We have bread now," he said, "for a long time to come;
And He told them of all the sweet lady had said,
And how kindly she sent Him with joy to their home.

A blessing from Joseph, from Mary a prayer,
Rewarded the lady for what she had done,
And Jesus said low, with His own God-like air,
"By her goodness, fair Miriam my heaven hath won!"

XXX.

THE SAW.

ONE day in Nazareth, under a scorching sun, a man was painfully sawing a long plank. This man was St. Joseph, the foster-father of Jesus, a simple working man, whose sublime epitaph is thus found in the Gospel: *A just man.*

The sweat was streaming from his brow, for the plank was broad and the teeth of the saw straight, as they were then made (says the legend), with difficulty catching the wood, at the third cut.

Twenty times did St. Joseph wipe his forehead, his face, his beard, and resume his work, without a murmur, or the least sign of impatience, doubtless offering up his toil and fatigue to God.

At length the saw gave its last silvery sound, to the great satisfaction of the workman, who, this time, manifested his joy by a brightening up of his fine and venerable face.

Mid-day rings.—The *Angelus* was not said then, but the fervent Jews raised their souls to God. Joseph did so, and laying himself down on a bed of chips, he soon slept what is aptly called the sleep of the just.

Now, Satan had been watching for some time at the door of the workshop. He had first seen a man hard at work; and, without knowing who he was, he said: "There is nothing to be done here!" . . . But the workman had laid down his saw, and was asleep.

Then Satan, little suspecting the quality of the dwellers in that house, resolved to play a trick on the slumberer, whose heavy breathing already assured Satan that he was fast asleep.

Taking, then, a visible form, he began by examining the tools, one after another: chisels,

hammers, planes, pincers. None of these seemed to give him the desired opportunity of doing mischief.

There remained the saw, which he angrily laid hold of. The saw of that time, the straight teeth of which, standing in line, gave him the drollest means of doing what he desired, either by breaking, or bending them, so as to place them farther apart, one from the other. He chose the latter, as the surest means of mystifying the artisan.

But the devil, it would seem, was no more of a mechanician than the Jews of that day, and he little thought that he was thus giving St. Joseph the secret of the real teething of a saw. So far from that was he, that when his work was finished, his face expressed a malicious pleasure that looked almost like joy. Then quitting his assumed form, he awaited the awaking of the blessed sleeper.

He had not to wait long. Joseph arose, and, with eyes still dim and misty from sleep, he mechanically took up the saw, which he

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tried on a plank, according to his custom, before he commenced cutting anything.

I leave you to guess his surprise, when, instead of a faint cut, the tool, in its going and coming, slipped over the wood with unwonted ease, and cut deep, to the great disappointment of the devil, who took flight, and never went there again.

The poor devil knew not that the holy man had prayed to God, and that God watches over the interests of those who invoke Him, whether they are asleep or awake.

XXXI.

THE CHOICE OF A KING.

YEA, truly, this day we will choose us a ruler,
Unto whom we shall all of us subject be.
We shall honor him duly as lord and as master,—
As king Archelaus ruleth, so shall he.
So long as he remaineth
Wise, prudent, patient, kind,
A true and faithful follower
In each one of us he shall find."

'Twas Simon thus spoke, of the children the eldest—
In their games and their frolics he led the rest;
Like a juvenile prophet, well noted were all his sayings,
And so free and frank he was that his comrades loved him the best.

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"Let us now begin," said he; "Little John, come hither!
Speak low, and tell me who will be thy choice;
I will inscribe the names—now, tell me who shall be master—
Ha! beware that none of them hear thy voice!"

Timidly John drew nigh, casting his blue eyes downward.
Fair as an Angel he was, light and waving his hair;
He was only six years old, but so sweet and gentle his nature,
That the children all would have his voice in that grand affair.
Said John, with a heavenly smile, "I would like to have Jesus."
He is not the oldest among us; but me, I like Him the best—
I would wish Him to be our king." "Thy judgment is good," quoth Simon,
And, his dark eyes beaming approval, he smiling turn'd to the rest.

"Mathias! what sayest thou? Thou art ever thoughtful and loving."
Pensively smiled Mathias, a pale and delicate child;
Shunn'd and neglected he was at times by his sturdier comrades,
Too grave and retiring was he to join in their gambols wild.
But One there was, who loved and pitied Mathias,
And at once from his pale lips fell the name of this generous friend.
"Jesus," he whisper'd low; "I will have none but Jesus—
No one like Him can pity, or comfort, or defend.

"He is the One that takes care of me, weeps with me when I am sorrowfu';
I would have Him for our king; there is none so fitting as He."
'Mathias, thou speakest well—wise thou art, little comrade;
Now, Andrew, brother of mine, say, who will thy choice be?"

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Said Andrew: "'Tis Mary's Son that ought to be
our ruler;
Simon, I pray thee, see that he shall be our king.
There is none of us half so good, so loving, so kind!
so patient—
Oh! no one is ever in trouble but comfort He's
sure to bring.
I know how kind He was to our mother when she
was afflicted,
When our father was taken away, and left her
lonely and sad;
Our Jesus told her of heaven, where husbands and
wives dwell united,
Till he made her look again as if she were almost
glad."

"What thou sayest is true, O Andrew; no one so
kind as Jesus—
So far, it seems to me we are all of the very same
mind.
Fair Matthew, come hither, I pray, and who thou
wilt choose now tell me;
Full soon thou wilt be a man—art thou to a ruler
inclined?"

"Yea, and 'tis Jesus I choose," gravely and slowly said Matthew.
"Who else is so fitted to rule—so generous, wise, and just!
Moreover, He looks a king; noble His face is and royal.
If a ruler we fain would have, Jesus it shall be, and must."

"'Tis well, 'tis well! I see that justice prevails," quoth Simon.
"Come hither, Lord Jesus, I pray thee, and listen to what I say.
Be not surprised to hear that Thou for our king art chosen—
Each one of us here is promised thine orders to obey."

Was He of earth, that Child, before whom they bent all lowly?
Or was He a heavenly spirit conceal'd in mortal guise?
Ah! truly He, and He only, merited all the honor,
For the light of Heaven's deep glory beam'd from His wondrous eyes.

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But a Mother is there who hears, and sees, and ponders
On every word and action of the Child—
"How fair He is! how sweet! Look now, O Joseph!
How fit He is to rule them!" and she smiled.
"How great one day shall be His royal power,
When 'neath His banners all the nations range!
Oh! light as now it is, be then His sceptre;
But great, indeed, shall be the wondrous change!"

Said Joseph: "Great, indeed! But yet a sword of sorrow
Shall pierce thy heart. But joy shall yet be thine,
And overflow thy soul: Mother of Man's Redeemer,
With Him, in glory, thou shalt, one day, shine!"

Thus did St. Joseph gently soothe and comfort
His blessed spouse, with loving words and sweet,
Foreshewing Jesus in resplendent glory,
In that bright heaven where they were all to meet.

XXXII.

AN APPARITION.

IT happened once that on the Feast of All Saints there died, in an Ursuline Convent, a good religious, named Gabriella of the Incarnation, who had been, in her lifetime, a model of all virtues. She appeared, after her death, to her Superior, Mother Angela, who since died in the odor of sanctity, and who related to her director, in the following terms, what had taken place:—

"On the 6th of November, 1660, between three and four o'clock in the morning, after saying my prayers, I was preparing to write some letters; but I found it impossible: I felt myself strongly impelled to beg that God would show mercy to the good Mother Incarnation; and, if she were not in glory, to grant

XII.

PARITION.

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it to her through the merits of Jesus Christ, His Divine Son, and by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, whose holy scapular she had worn. The reason why I felt bound to ask this request was, that all night long I could not keep from thinking of that dear mother; and often since her death, although I could fain have persuaded myself that she enjoyed God, my heart began to beat whenever I thought of her. At last, I felt it incumbent on me to ask Our Lord, that if it were for His glory and the welfare of souls, He would make known to us the state of that good religious.

"A little while after, she appeared before me with a very mild aspect, looking more humbled than suffering, although I saw well that she suffered much. At first, when I saw her so near me, I was very much frightened; but as there was nothing in her appearance to make me afraid, I soon got over my fear. Having made the sign of the cross on myself, I besought Our Lord that I might not be de-

ceived, and recommended myself to my Angel Guardian. After lookingly attentively at her, I resolved to speak to her, and asked her what state she was in, and whether we could render her any service. She replied that she was satisfying the Divine justice in purgatory. I begged of her to tell me what kept her there,—if God permitted it for our instruction. She heaved a deep sigh, and told me: 'I am there on account of several acts of negligence in the ordinary routine of religious life; a facility in giving in to sentiments too purely human in regard to the religious; but, above all, for a habit of keeping small things for my own use, and disposing of them according to my wants, or to my natural inclinations.' I replied: 'Why, you had permission.' 'Yes, sometimes I had,' she answered, 'or presumed I had; but that is not enough before God. The vow of poverty and the obligation of religious perfection demand a very different degree of strictness. God sees things with very different eyes from what we do, and if souls

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only knew, during life, the wrong they do to God and to themselves by not aiming at perfection, and how much they must suffer in order to expiate their weaknesses, their cowardly compliances, and their self-gratification, they would more easily overcome themselves in this life, and follow more faithfully the light of His grace.'

"I besought her to tell me how our community and I could remedy this evil. She replied: 'There is generally a want of submission of mind, of interior recollection, of charity in bearing with the neighbor, and of subjection to obedience: it was so with myself in my lifetime. As for you, in particular, you must be careful not to grant blindly, and through natural condescension, every little gratification to the senses. You should labor to destroy all tendency to partiality, and to establish in the community the spirit of simplicity and docility. I recommend to you those who are related to me; they often depart from the ways of God.'

"At the end of the discourse I asked her if we could serve her in any way. She answered: 'I ardently desire to see and possess God, but I am content to satisfy His justice as long as He pleases.' I asked her if her pain was great. 'It would be inconceivable,' she said, 'to those who do not feel it.' I besought her to be our advocate with God, and recommended to her one person in particular. 'That soul,' said she, 'is truly devoted to God: let her pray for me, and you also.' Saying this, she approached my face, as if to take leave of me: it seemed to me as though a coal of fire had burned me, although her face did not touch mine, and my arm having rubbed a little against her sleeve, was burned so that it pained me severely. At the same moment she disappeared.

"The whole of my left cheek continued very sore, and the burn on my arm, right at the wrist, is larger than a crown piece, and very painful.

"The same day, between eight and nine in

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the morning, my holy Angel appeared to me in my room, to which I had retired. (Her Angel Guardian often appeared to her.) I asked him if the vision I had had in the morning was real, and if it was the soul of my mother, Gabriella of the Incarnation. He replied: 'Yes, it is an abundance of grace that God has vouchsafed to you all, to let you know that the faults which people commit are greater than they suppose. This soul was of good will; profit by her example.'

"On the night between the 29th and 30th of the same month, being St. Andrew's day, this mother again appeared to me, and gave me to understand that she was putting in a part of her purgatory in our midst, that she hoped to enter on eternal rest on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and that the amiable Mother of Jesus, and St. Joseph, to whom she had been very devout, had obtained mercy for her; that her purgatory would have been long, without their assist-

ance. She told me that most religious had
much to satisfy for in the other life, because
they did not make a direct application to the
ordinary acts of religion, and that many o
the actions of life are done through habit
and have, therefore, little efficacy before God
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nature; that no soul is left without light t
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to penetrate that light, and follow it in the
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that is one of the principal causes of the pu
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sumed by the activity of the fire. Its understanding is illumined by a light which shows it the means it had of breaking these cords during life, and the reproaches of its conscience make known to it that it basely quitted the straight way of grace, to follow that of nature and the senses; wherefore, it condemns itself. It sees the ways of God, and the designs He had formed upon it, with the little correspondence it had brought to them, and that sight is to it a great torment, because of the immense goodness it knows in God, whose ways it is itself obliged to justify.'

"On the 8th of December, 1660, between five and six o'clock in the evening, my good Mother of the Incarnation appeared to me, all shining, and, having come near, said to me: 'The goodness of God permits me to tell you that I am now going to enjoy Him. Farewell, my dear mother! Work for eternity, to which you aspire, and assure men that whatsoever is not done, said, or suffered

for God, results but in pain and torment. There are many souls abused in their practices.' I begged that she would be our advocate with God. She assured me she would, and that she would pray for us. I recommended to her certain persons who had requested me to do so. She seemed to receive my request kindly and graciously, but without saying anything very distinctly in reply; and, approaching the window that overlooks the altar, where the Blessed Sacrament is, she made a profound genuflexion. After that, my holy Angel, who was with her, took her, as it were, by the hand, and both ascending upwards, vanished from my sight, leaving a sweet perfume in my chamber, and my heart full of joy for the happiness of that dear mother.

"It is because of the burn on my arm that I have not been able to write with mine own hand all this little narrative, but I have told all truly, as far as I could remember. I may simply say, that for a whole month I seem to

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have suffered a part of that good mother's purgatory, that she haunted me continually, and that I suffered severely from the pain of my burns. That state enables me to conceive the great purity of mind in which one must live in order to appear before God."

XXXIII.

THE LOST CHILDREN.

(From Faber's "Tales of the Angels.")

SIGH! sigh! sigh! said the midnight wind, as it swept over the great Brazilian forest. And the tall palms trembled, and waved their green fans, to get all the sea's coolness, which came in the breeze; and their feathery domes swung to and fro, like ships rocking at anchor.

"Lililpa, death must be very beautiful!" said Oniato, "for death is God's night."

"Ah! Oniato," replied Lililpa, "but light is more beautiful than darkness."

"Dearest sister, you must not say so," answered Oniato; "darkness is more beautiful than light. We see God better in the darkness."

XIII.

CHILDREN.

LES OF THE ANGELS.")

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"Why have your thoughts been so often wandering on God lately, my dearest brother?" said Lililpa. "God! God! it is a beautiful word, and makes a strange stir in my heart. Where is God? Who is God?"

"I know not, Lililpa; but when things make a stir in our hearts they must be real things. There must be a God, though perhaps His name is not God."

"Ah! Oniato, I see why you love the darkness. It is because it makes you think more of God. Beautiful darkness! it feels like a home."

"Oh! yes, Lililpa; and when I have listened to the missionaries reasoning with my father, I have sometimes thought that light was really darkness, and darkness really light, and that they had only agreed to look like each other, instead of looking like their own selves."

Indeed, the night was beautiful; just such a night as would be likely to make children talk like angels. I wonder how much they under-

stood of what they were saying to each other. We are all of us born poets, but only a few of us find it out.

They wandered on. They were lost in the forest. The boughs met above their heads like the roof of a cathedral. They heard the wild beasts arguing with each other, complainingly rather than savagely. Occasionally there were silences, and they thought they heard the earth breathe; but just as they were going to make certain of it, some night-bird from a lofty branch would suddenly pour forth gushes of clear song into the ear of the ancient night. Why is night ancient?—why should it be more ancient than day? Nobody knows, yet everybody says it is so, and feels that it is so.

Every now and then they saw the stars fighting in the sky. So Lililpa thought; but it was only the tossing of the branches, which kept showing and hiding the stars. There were many sights and many sounds in that wood, which the children did not understand.

But they felt them all; and somehow, when they felt them, they whispered to themselves, "God! God!" We enjoy the day-time. We feel the night-time. In the day-time God sees us. In the night-time we see God. On earth, to see God means to feel Him. Feeling is mostly the best kind of seeing.

Why had these children left home? They will never return to it. The End of the World will come in an hour, and they shall die in the waters of the wood; and, having been really dead before, will make themselves alive by dying. Oh, Blessed Waters of the Wood! Blessed all waters, which have wood in them —the wood of the Cross!

O Lililpa! is not this very solemn? Hark! how the wind murmurs! It has a voice like that of our dead pale-faced mother. Lililpa, I sometimes see my mother when I sleep. But listen to the wind! It sings as if it was unhappy. Perhaps the wind is a god!"

"But if it was a god, Oniato, it would not be unhappy!"

"O Lililpa! more and more I ask who is God? We have no God. We are not like the Christians with white faces, such as come to us, and such as they say were kings in this land thousands of years ago. They have a God whom they love. How grand the ruins of their churches are! Our mother was white-faced, they say; and she, too, had a God, and loved Him. Lililpa! I must have a God, if it is only to have something to love."

Lililpa burst into tears.

"Dearest Lililpa," said Oniato, "you know I love you; you know what I mean."

"Oh! yes, brother," replied Lililpa; "I am not unhappy. I do know what you mean, for I feel the same myself; and yet I love you, oh! so much, so much, it hurts my heart sometimes!"

And Oniato threw his arms round her, and said: "We will find God to-night!" And a star shone into Lililpa's tearful eyes. Oh! sometimes the stars seem almost to speak by their shining.

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burn those white-faced priests in the fires of the snake-temples. Even now it seems to me as if the wind was full of the sound of those sighs and murmurs which they make in the fire."

"And yet, Lililpa, they are not like the murmurs of pain or anger."

"No! that is the strange thing."

"Lililpa, I cannot breathe in my father's palace. I have enticed you here on purpose. Let us find God. If not, let us live in the forest, and die here, like flowers. Let us seek the white-faced man of God whom my father drove into the forest to-day to die of hunger, or to be eaten by the wild beasts. I have hidden a flask of wine in my clothes to take to him, if we can find him."

"Oniato, shall we ask those dear stars to lead us to him?"

"No, Lililpa; his God will know best where he is. To be sure, the eyes of the stars seem to be everywhere. But I think we had better pray to his God instead."

"Oniato! see! the earth is on fire!"

"No, Lililpa; it is only the fire-flies. Let us follow them. They are the living stars of the wood. Perhaps God has sent them to lead us."

So they followed the fire-flies.

Sigh! sigh! sigh! sang the wind; for it was very tired, as it had been all round the earth. And the fire-flies played round the heads of the children, like glories round the heads of Saints in pictures. Some swung like globe-shaped lamps in front of them, and seemed to lead the way. Many wild beasts were prowling round. The flame-colored eyes of the pumas looked at the children as they passed. But they dared not touch them; for the beasts saw three Angels with the children, whom the children did not see. Two were the Guardian Angels of the children, and the third was the Angel of the Sacrament of Baptism.

What a silence! Deep, deep, deep silence! Silence above! Silence below! Silence all round!

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"Oniato," said Lililpa, "silence is more like a god than wind."

It was near midnight. In the heart of the wood a huge flower slowly opened out, and blossomed, and filled the forest with a most exquisite perfume.

"O Lililpa! there is the Midnight Flower! How I should like to be a Midnight Flower, with nobody to see me blossom, nobody to smell my fragrance, except God! I suppose He made the rest of the flowers for us, but that one for Himself. He keeps its sweetness for Himself in the lonely darkness. It smells like the flesh of the white-faced priests in the fires, so sweet! The smell of it sometimes comes into my window from the wood. It always makes me think of God."

Dear children! They, too, were truly Midnight Flowers, and the hour of their blooming was at hand.

"O Oniato! what beautiful soft thunder is that!"

They had come near a waterfall, under dark

cedars. They saw the foam flash under the dark branches.

"Oniato! that waterfall speaks to me like the voice of a God."

"Perhaps, Lililpa, there is no God, except that Christ who makes the white-faced priests smell sweetly in the fire."

"Hush! hush! Oniato,—look at the globe of fire-flies under the palm: there is the Christian priest sitting on a rock by the river! His back is resting against the tree."

At that moment it thundered under their feet. The forest rocked and creaked, and the ground quivered, like the sail of a ship when the wind slackens.

They went up to the priest. He seemed asleep. But it was not so. He had fainted from hunger. His face was very beautiful. When the fire-flies disappeared, it was the color of moonlight, and shone very marvellously in the dark night, with a soft shining.

"Oniato," whispered Lililpa, "it is the light of his God shining upon his face."

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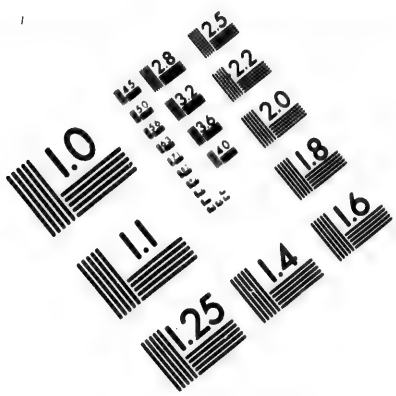

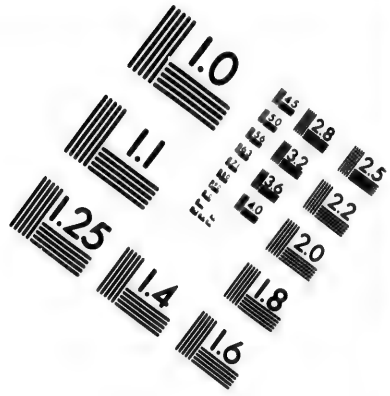

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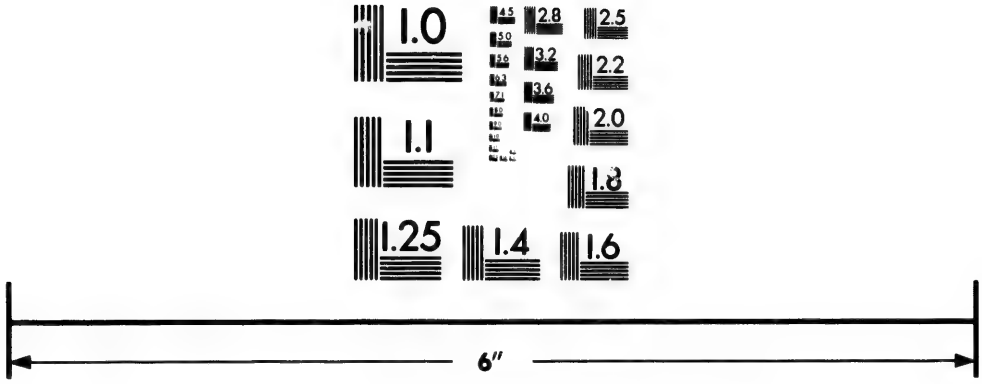

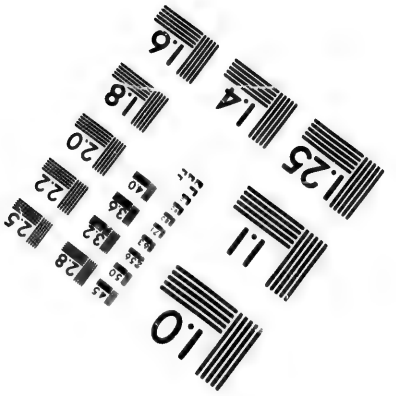

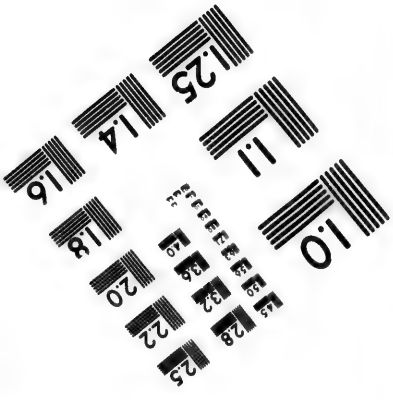

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It thundered again under their feet. They looked up. Green, and purple, and crimson meteors were rushing about the sky, and crackling in the air. Strange children! they were not afraid. They fear nothing who are seeking God.

They went up to the priest, and poured some wine down his throat, and he revived, and opened his eyes, and looked at them.

"My children, who are you?"

"We are the king's children. We want to know about your God."

He smiled, and blessed them, saying, "You shall be king's children, indeed!"

Then it thundered again under their feet, and it thundered over their heads, and the trees moaned, and the meteors crackled.

And he told them about Bethlehem.

They heard a hissing noise. A great dark mountain was opposite to them on the other side of the river, and behold! a broad, solid flash of violet-colored lightning split the black mountain in two. Suddenly there was silence.

And he told them about Nazareth.

A distant roar was heard. On came the whirlwind. It rooted up all the trees, and carried them miles into the air. The black mountain sank into the earth with a loud rumbling. But they were not hurt. Then once more the rushing of the river was heard in the silent night. It wanted only a few minutes to midnight.

And he told them about Calvary.

And they clasped their heads and wept.

Behold! ten thousand wild beasts, howling and moaning, rushed past them, pursued by a great yellow fire, which had broken like a river out of the earth. It did not hurt the priest or the children.

And he told them of the Mount of Olives, and the Ascension, and the coming again to Judgment.

And Liillpa took hold of Oniata's hand, and they both looked up to heaven, and said, "Jesus! Jesus!"

And the priest smiled, and wept.

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And a venerable white-haired old man suddenly appeared at the other side of the river, and said, "It is time!"

And the priest said: "Blessed St. Joseph, I obey."

And he led the children to the edge of the rock, and said: "You have given me wine: I will give you water,—water with the blood of Jesus hidden in it."

And he explained Baptism; and they begged to be baptized.

And the heavens opened, with a fierce white light; and a huge round glory, like a sunrise, was seen coming swiftly up from the east.

And the priest said: "It is the Lord." And he baptized the children. And when they were baptized they said, "Come, sweet Jesus!"

And the earthquake shook the rock on which they stood, and it rolled over into the deep, foamy water; and, as they fell, the priest's arm was round them; and they saw

St. Joseph smiling at them; and he pointed upwards, where a heavenly Lady, all dressed in golden light, was waiting for them.

At first they thought it was their mother. But the Lady was more beautiful than their mother; and, though it seems strange to say so, her face was more full of love than their mother's was. Yet everybody, who sees that heavenly Lady for the first time, thinks her like his mother, because her beauty is so motherly.

Then they kissed each other, and said: "The Angels are whispering in our hearts that it is Mary of Bethlehem;" and they cried, "Dear Mary!" And all three sank into the cold waters; and it thundered louder than ever, and the water gurgled in their ears, and they clung closer together, and it was painful for a moment. Then their ears were full of the sound of harps; and they opened their eyes, and the water was turned into light, and it was heaven!

And those two were the last children, and

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ore full of love than their
everybody, who sees that
the first time, thinks her
ecause her beauty is so

d each other, and said:
whispering in our hearts
f Bethlehem;" and they
y!" And all three sank
s; and it thundered louder
water gurgled in their ears,
loser together, and it was
ent. Then their ears were
of harps; and they opened
he water was turned into
eaven!
were the last children, and

so the world ended. Oh! it was a beautiful midnight to Oniato and Lililpa! It is day-time with them now, eternal day-time. O, happy children! who belong to Jesus, and have been saved by His Precious Blood!

XXXIV.

THE BIRD OF PARADISE AND THE HUMMING-BIRD.

THE days were accomplished. The great promise of the Messiah was about to be fulfilled. God, in His wisdom, had made choice of the privileged creature whom He would give as Mother to His Divine Son becoming incarnate for the salvation of men. And soon the nativity of the August Virgin Mary came to gladden the whole world. By another decree of His admirable Providence, God prepared for the future Queen of Heaven a spouse worthy of her greatness and her virtues.

In a city of Juda, in a family, descending from David, but reduced, by the vicissitudes of fortune, to the humble rank of working people, a child came into the world: it was

XXIV.

PARADISE AND THE MING-BIRD.

were accomplished. The omise of the Messiah was be fulfilled. God, in His had made choice of the whom He would give as ine Son becoming incar- n of men. And soon the ust Virgin Mary came to world. By another de- ble Providence, God pre- ure Queen of Heaven a ner greatness and her vir-

la, in a family, descending educed, by the vicissitudes humble rank of working ne into the world: it was

the young Joseph. Whilst the Angels surrounded the cradle of the new-born babe, and celebrated his arrival in the world, a Bird of Paradise appeared in the vicinity of the lowly dwelling, and sang, in melodious tones: "Behold the child of benediction, the chosen of the Lord!"

Joseph grew up, progressing more and more in the ways of perfection, like the sun advancing towards his meridian, and assuming every day, under the action of grace, a new resemblance to the august companion for whom he was reserved. Mary, on her side, grew in the shade of the Sanctuary, amongst the young maidens brought up within the precincts of the Temple of Jerusalem. The day had come when, according to the custom of the Jewish people, Mary was to be betrothed. The high priest, ignorant of the designs of God upon the August Virgin, but moved by a Divine inspiration, had placed in the Ark the walking-sticks of the several candidates. By a miracle of God's almighty

power, when, on the third day, the sticks were taken from the Ark, that of Joseph was covered with flowers. At the same moment, there appeared mysteriously in the Temple the Bird of Paradise, bearing on his emerald wings the message from heaven: "Joseph is the chosen of the Lord!"

The heavens had dropped down dew on the earth, and the clouds had rained the Just One expected by the world. Warned by the Angel, during his sleep, of the sanguinary projects of the cruel Herod, Joseph had promptly taken the Child and His Mother, and fled into Egypt. One day, during the painful journey through the desert, the Holy Family had stopped in the shade of a palm-tree, which immediately bent down to offer its fruit to our Holy Travellers.

Meanwhile, the air seemed all on fire with the scorching rays of the sun, and numberless flies disturbed the little Infant Jesus, whilst He slept in His Mother's arms. Forgetting her own suffering and fatigue, and

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thinking only of her Divine Son, Mary, unable to drive away this swarm of troublesome flies, raised her eyes to heaven, and put up a fervent prayer. The Infant God at this moment awoke, and gave His Mother one of those Divine looks which penetrated the soul of the August Virgin with heavenly consolation. He then stretched out His little hands. Immediately the flies were changed into tiny birds, sparkling with the colors of the most precious stones. They began to fly around the Holy Family, delighting them with the brilliant splendor of their many-tinted plumage.

Whilst this flock of winged rubies circled around, doing homage to the King of Nature, appeared in their midst the Bird of Paradise, and, resting on Joseph's head, he said by his song: "Behold him whom the Lord chose to be the head, the protector, and the guide of His family!"

Joseph had fulfilled his great mission upon earth. He was going to rejoin his fathers in

the dwelling of hope, and to bring them the happy tidings of their approaching deliverance.

Around his death-bed, Jesus and Mary ministered to the wants of the dying Just Man and soothed him with their loving care. Suddenly there appeared at the window of the humble cottage in Nazareth, the Bird of Paradise. Spreading its beautiful wings before the eyes of Joseph, it warbled forth, in joyous strain :—

"Courage, good and faithful servant! Soon shalt thou be with thy Son and thy God, in Paradise!"

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XXXV.

THE LAST MOMENTS OF ST. JOSEPH.

(From "The Mystical City of God.")

DURING eight years St. Joseph had been exercised by pains and sufferings, and his generous spirit was ever more and more purified in the crucible of patience and divine love. With years his tortures increased, his strength diminished. The inevitable term of life, to which we pay the universal tribute of death, approached. His Blessed Spouse increased her devotion and her cares, to serve him with inviolable fidelity.

This most holy Lady, knowing, through her infused science, that the last hour of her chaste spouse in this place of exile was very near, went to find her Adorable Son, and said to Him: "My Lord and my God, the time for

the death of thy servant Joseph, which Thou hast determined by an eternal will, is near at hand. I beseech Thee, Lord, by Thine infinite goodness, to assist him in this hour, so that his death may be as precious to Thee as his life has been agreeable. Remember, my Son, the love and the humility of Thy servant —his merits, his virtues, and the pains he has taken to preserve Thy life and mine."

Our Saviour replied to her: "My Mother, your requests are pleasing to me, and the merits of Joseph are in my thoughts. I will now assist him, and I will give him so eminent a place among the princes of my people, that it will be a subject of admiration for the Angels, and a motive for praises to them and to men. I will not do for any nation that which I will do for your spouse."

Our August Lady returned thanks to her most sweet Son for this promise.

During the nine days that preceded the death of St. Joseph, the Son and the Mother watched by him day and night. They so ar-

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an eternal will, is near at
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ranged it that one or the other was always with him. During these nine days, the Angels chanted three times each day, by the Lord's command, celestial music for the holy patient. It was composed of canticles of praise to the Most High, and of benedictions for the Saint himself; and, besides, so delicious a fragrance pervaded all that poor habitation, that not only the man of God was fortified and cheered by it, but many persons outside.

A day before his death, all inflamed with divine love for so many benefits, he was elevated into a sublime ecstasy, which continued twenty-four hours, the Lord preserving his strength and life by a miraculous interposition.

In this ecstatic state he clearly beheld the Divine Essence, and discovered in it, without a veil, that which he had believed by faith, either in the incomprehensible Divinity, or in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption—the Church Militant and the Sacraments with which she is enriched. The Holy Trinity

destined him to be the precursor of Our Saviour Jesus Christ to the Saints who were in Limbo, and commanded him to announce to them anew their redemption, and to prepare them for the visit which the same Lord was to make them to conduct them to eternal felicity. St. Joseph returned from this ecstasy radiant in beauty, his soul divinised from the view of the being of God. He addressed himself to his spouse, and requested her benediction; but she prayed her most holy Son to give it, which His Divine Majesty was pleased to do. Our Blessed Lady, having knelt, besought St. Joseph to bless her, as her spouse and head. The man of God, not without a divine impulse, gave his benediction to his beloved spouse before their separation. She afterwards kissed the hand with which he had blessed her, and requested him to salute for her the Saints in heaven.

The most humble Joseph, wishing to close his life by the seal of humility, asked pardon of his holy spouse for the faults which he

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might have committed in her service, as a feeble man of earthly mould. He entreated her to assist him in this last hour, and to intercede for him. He testified, above all, his gratitude to Our Adorable Saviour, for the benefits that he had received from His most liberal hand, during all his life, and particularly in this sickness. Then taking leave of his blessed Spouse, he said to her: "You are blessed among all women, and chosen above all creatures. Let angels and men praise you. Let all nations know and exalt your dignity. Let the name of the Most High through you be known, adored, and glorified in all future ages, and eternally praised by all the blessed spirits, for having created you so pleasing in His eyes. I trust to meet you in the heavenly land."

After this, the man of God addressed Our Lord Jesus Christ; and, wishing to speak to His Majesty with profound respect, he made every effort to kneel on the ground. But the sweet Jesus approaching, received him in His

arms, and the Saint, resting his head upon His shoulder, said :—

"My Lord and my God, Son of the Eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the world, give Thine eternal benediction to Thy servant, who is the work of Thy hands. Pardon the faults I have committed in Thy service and in Thy company. I confess Thee, I glorify Thee, I render to Thee, with a contrite and humble heart, eternal thanks for having chosen me, by Thine ineffable goodness, from among men, to be the Spouse of Thine own Mother. Grant, Lord, that Thine own glory may be the theme of my gratitude through all eternity."

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XXXVI.

THE HOLY HOUSE.

THERE are men to be found whose limited view sees, for man here below, only material well-being; their heart is dead to every sentiment of a more elevated order. How little in keeping that is with the nobility of our origin! And is there, then, no consolation for this transitory life in helping to merit eternal years? Oh! how much better Religion knows our nature! The true friend of nations, she is far from being insensible to their physical prosperity; she favors them rather by the wisdom of her laws. But she knows that the first wants of men are the wants of their souls. No, factories are not of equal value with temples! Worth far more is the house of prayer, where eyes are raised to heaven, than the house of hard labor, where

they are kept bent on the ground. A temple, and especially a shrine, is a common centre, a spot where all may unite and mingle together—those who are widely separated by distance or by fortune, those whose interests and inclinations are the most dissimilar; it is the paternal roof, under which all the members of the great family, assembled round the same table, and storing up the same memories, feel themselves children of the same father: it is the beloved abode of poor and faithful nations. A chapel of pilgrimage is a refuge for an afflicted soul, which has nothing more to hope from men for relief to its pains; it is a heavenly asylum for a heart disenchanted of the world, and feeling the want of God. At the foot of a lonely altar, one more easily lends an ear to the voice that speaks to the soul, and far from the tumult of the world the peace of God makes itself better felt.

Hence, the devotion of pilgrimage is connected with a feeling natural to the heart of man, and may be said to be as ancient as the

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heart of man. Discouraged by the confusion of tongues, the sons of Noah and their children chose for their dwelling-place the tops of the highest mountains, to preserve themselves, if possible, from a new deluge; and they only descended into the plains when pasturage for their flocks failed, and the soil refused to produce the grain necessary for the support of their rising colonies. Thence comes the respect of the Orientals for their sacred mounts, a respect which they testify by annual visits, accompanied by vows, offerings, and prayers.

Veneration for the cradle of nations was afterwards transferred to men who made themselves illustrious by heroic deeds, and sites which recalled great memories, noble labors, lofty virtues. Thus it is that the gratitude of the Jewish people preserves from age to age the tomb of Esther and Mardochai, to which the Hebrews spread throughout Asia have gone on pilgrimage for two thousand years. Strange it is that the tomb of

two exiles, raised by the gratitude of some captives, has survived the great Assyrian empire, and alone saved from oblivion the ruins of Ecbatana!

Man is like the ivy; he must be supported by something in order that he may have courage to live. When he finds neither sympathy nor comfort amongst his fellow-beings, he instinctively invokes the inhabitants of a better world, and demands of them that help which society either refuses or is powerless to grant him. Catholicity, which so well understands and knows how to sanctify the inclinations of our heart, has not retrenched from her worship the devotion of pilgrimages; and, from the first ages of the Church, faithful Christians were seen kneeling in the places sanctified by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, or made famous by miracles obtained through the intercession of Mary. It was for Protestantism, which discolors and pulverizes all it touches, to snatch this crown from the brow of Jesus and of Mary, by forbidding its secta-

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ries those pious visits which are so useful to man, since he finds therein consolation in his woes, support in his weakness, and relief in his miseries.

The illustrious Robertson, unblinded by the narrow prejudices of his sect, openly acknowledges the benefits for which Europe is indebted to foreign pilgrimages. First, the freedom of the communes, the creation of commerce and the navy, the propagation of intelligence, the improvement of agriculture. Then, it is the emancipation of the serfs to which pilgrimages contributed more than anything else; for the feudal lord, who mingled, barefoot, with pilgrims of all conditions, understood more easily, in his hours of humility and penance, that these despised slaves were yet his brethren before God; and when he had obtained the grace he went to seek, in some ancient shrine far away from his own castle, the thought often came to him to free a certain number of his vassals in honor of Christ, the enemy of slavery, and of the

Blessed Virgin Mary, who is all sweetness and mercy.

After the Holy Sepulchre and St. Peter's at Rome, there is no pilgrimage in all Christendom more famous than that of the most holy House of Loretto. The holy house of Nazareth was venerated by Christians, even in the life-time of the Apostles, and St. Helena built a temple around it, which received the name of St. Mary's. Under the rule of the Arabian caliphs, a multitude of French pilgrims went to adore Jesus and honor Mary in that poor and lowly dwelling, where they led, for such a long space of time, a laborious and hidden life. But when the Turkish Seljoucides had enslaved their former masters, the pilgrims from Europe who ventured into Syria, to visit Jerusalem and Nazareth, were so barbarously treated that it roused to fury the entire West, which threw itself on Asia. When Godfrey de Bouillon had been proclaimed king of Jerusalem, Tancred was named governor of Galilee. That prince,

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Bouillon had been pro-
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who had a great devotion to Mary, proved it by the sumptuous offerings wherewith he enriched the church of Nazareth. After the expedition of St. Louis, that corner of the earth, regarded as the cradle of Christianity, was defended, foot by foot, by the Knights of the Temple. Those valiant warriors shed tears of rage and grief at sight of the holy places profaned by the Saracens. Sometimes, forgetting the distance that separates the creature from the Creator, they carried their rash zeal so far as to be vexed with Him who guides the course of human affairs, and reproached the God of Armies with the victories of their enemies.

Galilee, whitened with the bones of the Latin warriors, had become Mahometan. God willing not that the Holy House of Mary should remain exposed to the profanation of the Infidels, had it transported by Angels to Sclavonia or Dalmatia, to a little mountain called Tersato. The miracles every day wrought in that house, the judicial investigation which

deputies from that country went to Nazareth to make, in order to establish the fact of its removal to Dalmatia; finally, the universal persuasion of the nations, who came from all parts to venerate it, seemed to be incontestible proofs of the truth of the prodigy. It pleased God, nevertheless, to give yet another, whereof all Italy and Dalmatia were in some sort the witness. After three years and seven months, the Holy House was transported across the Adriatic Sea, to the territory of Recanati, in the March of Ancona, in the midst of a wood belonging to a pious and noble widow, named Lauretta. An ancient tradition relates that, on the arrival of the Holy House, the great trees of the Italian forest bowed down in token of respect, and so remained till the winds, the axe, or age laid them on the ground.

This new removal grieved the people of Dalmatia so much that they could scarcely survive it. To console themselves, they built, on the very spot, a church consecrated to the Mother of God, since in charge of the Fran-

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ciscans, and on the door of which was placed this inscription: *Hic est locus in quo fuit sacra domus Nazarena, quæ nunc in Recineti partibus colitur.* Many inhabitants of Dalmatia even came to Italy to fix their dwelling near the Holy House, and established there the company of *Corpus-Christi*, so called by the Sclavonians, till the pontificate of Paul III.

The event was so noised about in Christendom, that there came from almost all Europe an innumerable multitude of pilgrims to Recanati, in order to honor the Holy House of *Loretto*, as it was called. To establish more and more the truth of this miracle, the inhabitants of the province sent to Dalmatia, and afterwards to Nazareth, sixteen persons the best qualified for the task, who made a new investigation in those places. But God Himself vouchsafed to make it manifest beyond all doubt, by suddenly renewing, twice in succession, the prodigy of the removal in the very territory of Recanati. For, at the end of eight months, the forest of Loretto, being infested

by brigands who stopped pilgrims, the House
was transported a thousand miles away, and
placed on a little height belonging to two
brothers of the family of Antici; and finally,
the latter having taken up arms one against
the other, to divide the offerings of the pil-
grims, the Holy House was transported to a
place farther off, and on the high road, where
it remained, and where the town called Loretto
was afterwards built.

The church of Loretto has been magnifi
cently adorned by the Sovereign Pontiffs, wh
have themselves often gone thither on pil
grimage. Three doors of chased bronze giv
entrance to the holy temple, in the centre
which stands the Holy House, in its garb
white marble, adorned with superb *bassi-relie*
The miraculous statue of Mary is carved
cedar wood, covered with magnificent drape
and placed on an altar resplendent with pr
cious stones. The niche it occupies is lin
with plates of gold, and lamps of massive silv
burn night and day before it. May they

stopped pilgrims, the House
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an altar resplendent with pre-
The niche it occupies is lined
gold, and lamps of massive silver
d day before it. May they be

the image of our lasting love for the Divine Mother of the Saviour!

With the intention of thanking God for the great benefit He was pleased to confer on Western Christendom,—when, to compensate for the loss of the Holy Sepulchre, He caused to be transported to a Catholic land the humble yet august house wherein the Virgin Mary received the Angel's message, and where, by the consent of that Amiable Mother of God, the Word was made flesh and began to dwell with us,—the Church instituted a feast, under the name of *the translation of the Holy House of Loretto,*—a feast which is celebrated during the holy time of Advent. Hitherto it has not been one of obligation in the Universal Church; but it is kept at Rome and in all the Pontifical States, in Tuscany, in the Kingdom of Naples, in Spain, in Belgium, and also in most of the religious Orders.

Benedict XIV., of immortal memory, the Bollandists, a hundred Pontifical Bulls, establish as a fact worthy of faith, that the Sanc-

tuary of Our Lady of Loretto, venerated by all Catholic nations, is the sacred house in which the Word of God was conceived. Transported by Angels to the banks of the Adriatic, that poor house, more rich, more magnificent in the eyes of faith than the Temple of Solomon, has been visited for six hundred years, by all that the Church has produced greatest in the order of sanctity. St. Philip de Neri, St. Ignatius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. Alphonso Liguori, went to meditate, in the shadow of the walls which, for thirty-three years, sheltered Jesus and Mary, on the great mystery of eternal love.

Sovereign Pontiffs,—powerful monarchs,—illustrious princesses,—men of genius,—rich and poor,—went also on pilgrimage to this Holy House, where, for nearly twenty centuries, the Creator of the world and the Queen of Heaven have dwelt.

Humble abode, become, by the Incarnation of the Word, the holiest place on earth, thy

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blessed walls must have melted away with wonder, when they felt themselves touched by the hand of the Infant God, when they had the glory of protecting the existence of His August Mother, when they were witness of the highest manifestation of Divine love. Let other nations boast their gigantic monuments, let Rome and Greece propose for admiration their temples of marble and of porphyry; let them glory, as much as they will, in their palaces, all glittering with gold and jewels: thou alone, O House of Nazareth, hast the proud boast of containing the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Judge of the universe. Yes, sacred dwelling, it is under thy modest roof that infinite wisdom, power, and goodness have fully revealed themselves by the Incarnation. Oh! how these truths make my heart beat! how they expand my sentiments of admiration and of gratitude for Jesus and His Divine Mother!

XXXVII.

THE ADVOCATE OF HOPELESS CASES.

ST. PETER holds the keys of heaven's gate,
Kind, but severe he is, old legends state;
For the poorest comer he finds a place,
If he lived and died in the Lord's sweet grace.
But if any one comes who spent his days
Far from God and His blessed ways,
Neither crown nor sceptre could favor win,
Nor the Pope himself might enter in.

Who knocks so?—'Tis a mighty lord.
Was his life a good one to record?
Did he keep God's precepts night and day?—
No.—No heaven for him. Away! away!—
And who is this other?—A miser.—Go!
No lover of money will Jesus know.—

XXVII.

OF HOPELESS CASES.

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His blessed ways,
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'Tis a mighty lord.
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r him. Away! away!—
her?—A miser.—Go!
will Jesus know.—

And the third?—A clever attorney.—Nay,
No conscienceless lawyer admit I may.—
This other one! What hath he to show?
Some eloquent writings. Let him go.
And this artist?—Great things hath he done.—
Here by good works alone is glory won.—
Ha! this valiant soldier! how died he?—
He fought, lest his honor should tarnish'd be,
And so was slain.—But Our Lord once said,
When He to Caiaphas' hall was led,
And cruelly struck, as the Scriptures say:
"From him who strikes turn not away."—
Now, who is this lady, in robes so fine?—
On earth, her beauty was call'd divine.
So ample her robes, it took folding-doors,
To open her way to her marble floors.—
Ah! narrow the way is Our Lord hath made;
The broad way she chose, I am sore afraid.
The flowery path leads down to hell,
The thorny to heaven, as sages tell.
If heaven were gain'd by the easy way,
What need were there, then, to fast and pray?
The just would have vigils and tears in vain,
And sinners the profit, without the pain.

In Naples, a story like this is told,
A simple tale of the ages old,
From which may be taken both bad and good,
According to what is the hearer's mood.
By people in health it is oft abused,
And by the dying with profit used.
'Mongst the Lazzaroni it, then, occurr'd,
And the tale full many a heart hath stirr'd.

Since Peter first kept watch and ward,
A moment he had not been off guard;
Yet sinners so many had found their way
Into heaven, he knew not what to say.
"If those people are happy now," said he,
"'Tis not my fault, as all may see;
For, as to me, I take good care
That no such persons shall enter there."

The beloved Apostle went that way:
"What aileth thee, Peter?" he stopped to say.
"Is anything wrong with the Church below?"—
"No, I fear for the Church up here."—"How so?"
"Say, hast thou not mark'd some faces here
That little fitted for heaven appear?

ke this is told,
ages old,
taken both bad and good,
s the hearer's mood.
it is oft abused,
ith profit used.
oni it, then, occurr'd,
any a heart hath stirr'd.

pt watch and ward,
ot been off guard;
y had found their way
ew not what to say.
e happy now," said he,
as all may see;
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ns shall enter there."

le went that way:
, Peter?" he stopped to say.
g with the Church below?"—
Church up here."—"How so?"
ot mark'd some faces here
r heaven appear?

They needs must have led bad lives below;
You have but to look at them to know
That heaven has cost them less to buy,
Ay, an hundred-fold, than you or I."
—"'Tis true," said John, "but you're not to blame,
The keys of heaven you kept the same."
"I know," said Peter, "but now, you see,
'Tis Joseph makes all this trouble for me.
Let people on earth be what they may,
Though they spend their lives in the very worst way,
If they call upon him when death draws near,
And cry '*Meâ culpâ*,' he brings them here.
How he gets them in, why, I cannot tell;
But 'tis not by my gate, I know full well.
Now, John, we must let the Master know."
—"You may try," said John, "but before you go,
I tell you that Peter has but small chance
Should Joseph to plead his cause advance."
Then Peter bethought him 'twere well to take
Advice, and of John a guide to make.
"Dear Apostle," said he, "I remember now
How the Lord loved him of the gentle brow:
When at the supper he told us all
'Into treachery one of you twelve shall fall,'

I, like the others, was stupified,
And dared not ask 'How shall this woe betide?'
How you on the Master's bosom lay,
And were not afraid such words to say.
So then I made you a sign to speak,
And He turn'd to you with aspect meek,
When *we* all shrank from His searching eye,
And, of all, was none more afraid than I.
Now, come with me, John, and I will not fear."
—Together they seek the Master dear;
Peter looking a little confused,
And John, as though he were much amused.
Full soon they saw the Saviour stand
With Mary and Joseph on either hand.
"What would'st thou, Peter?" the Master said.
"I am troubled, dear Lord," and he rais'd his head;
"John will tell Thee why I grieve,—
It is that, without let or leave,
All sorts of people Joseph lets in,
Even those who have spent their life in sin;
If, at their death on him they call,
Why, into heaven he brings them all;—
Indeed, good Lord, it is hardly fair
To those who serve thee well down there."

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e thee well down there."

—"But, Peter, if I forgive his sins,
A heavenly crown the sinner wins,—
No soul to heaven hath Joseph brought
Who had not first my mercy sought."
—"I know," said Peter, "to die in grace
Is all that is needed to see Thy face;
'Twas thus the good thief got entrance here,
And such cases there may be yet, that's clear,—
But, methinks 'tis not well for the Church below,
That these elect of Joseph's to heaven go:
If people on earth should come to hear
That such sinners may find an entrance here,
My successors may thunder forth in vain
The terrible judgments, the endless pain,
Awaiting the sinner beyond the grave,
Who, in life, seeketh not his soul to save."
—"Peter, 'tis true; but yet, I pray,
How could I say my father nay?
For thee, friend Peter, let none in
Who cannot show pardon for their sin."
—"But if Joseph goes on in this singular way,
What use is in my keeping watch, I say?
I close the gate, but the walls they scale,
I'm sorry to have to tell the tale.

Now here is John who can safely say
That heaven grows worse from day to day,
By letting in, every week or so,
A *good thief* or two, as we all of us know.
I would not complain if the thing were rare,
But heaven is full of them now, I declare."

Far different was the Saviour's care,
He who once died high raised in air,
Praying for mercy on His foes,
And feeling, more than death's dread throes,
The cruel thought that His suff'rings dire
Would not save all men from hell's fierce fire.
So, hearing St. Peter's complaint, He smiled,
And His look was so very sweet and mild
That Peter thought he had carried the day,
And was henceforth to have his rightful way.
"Now Peter," the sweet Lord Jesus said,—
The Apostle, list'ning, bow'd his head,—
"We will settle this matter once for all:
You want none here but my chosen few,
And would have heaven gain'd by service true;
Now, I give it for love, as thou shalt see,
And the fuller it is, the more pleasing to me:

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is, the more pleasing to me:

I have suffer'd so much to redeem mankind
That to save them all I am well inclined;
In this, then, Joseph and I agree,
And if our mercy displeases thee,
Go choose a company of thine own,
And make it to suit thyself alone;
But Mary and Joseph and I, all three,
Will have a heaven so fair and free
That every sinner who contrite dies
Shall there in endless glory rise."
—"Friend Peter," said John, "What think you now?"
—Said Peter, "Lord, to Thy will I bow."

APPENDIX.

A.

ST. JOSEPH'S NAME.

The eighth day after his birth, the son of Jacob was circumcised, according to law, and was called Joseph. That blessed name, which signifies *abundance* and *increase*, because it announced the treasures of grace and of merit wherewith his soul was to be enriched, is the noblest and the sweetest of all names, after those of Jesus and Mary. According to St. Anselm and St. John Damascene, it contained an epitome of the whole history of the new-born child. Under his auspices was to grow up that Infant God, who, visiting the sterility of the anathematized earth, was to spread abroad over it the abundance of His graces and His benefits. He himself, raised up by that God from humiliation and

oblivion, was to acquire, before men and angels, an increase of honor and glory.

The name of Joseph realizes, therefore, to the letter, its etymological signification. Everywhere there are towns, religious congregations, and Christians, who honor him by bearing it. It has designated, in history, many saints, many bishops, even many princes. Nor is its reign ended; and it is to be hoped that it shall be placed, as a perfume and a sacred seal, on the brow of the children of this age, and that this generation will grow up, pure and active, after the image of St. Joseph.

B.

AD BEATISSIMUM JOSEPH.

INVOCATIO.

J esu nutritor pater, conjuxque Mariæ,
O sidus radians, Cœlicolumque decor!
S is tu nostra salus tetro sub limine lethi,
E t nobis liceat, te recreante, mori!
P rotector mentes miseras solare tuorum;
H ymnos da æternos mox ut ad astra canant!

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Cœlicolumque decor!
lus tetro sub limine lethi,
te recreante, mori!
es miseras solare tuorum;
rnos mox ut ad astra canant!

(TRANSLATION.)

INVOCATION TO THE BLESSED ST. JOSEPH.

Foster father of Jesus, chaste spouse of Mary, bright star of heaven, the glory and honor of the Saints, ah! be our safeguard at that sorrowful hour when we cross the threshold of our eternity. Grant us the favor of expiring gently under thy blessed eyes! Powerful Protector, comfort, on earth, the sorrowful soul of thy servants, and grant that they may one day go to chant in heaven the never-ceasing hymn of eternal felicity!

C.

BAPTISM OF THE FIRST SAVAGE AT MONTREAL.

The first savage baptized and married before the Church received in baptism the name of Joseph; and that, says Father Vimont, to make him bear the name of the head of the first family presented by the clergy of Montreal as the model of the savages and the patron of the country.

D.

ST. JOSEPH'S MARRIAGE RING.

Benedict XIV., in his *Treatise on the Beatification and Canonization of Saints*, represents, as worthy of veneration, the pious belief held by the inhabitants of Perugia, that they possess that same ring which Joseph put on Mary's finger at the moment of their union.

Pius IX., in the journey which he made in 1857, through the States of the Church, amidst the acclamations of his subjects, when celebrating the holy Mass in the cathedral of Perugia, requested that this famous relic should be exposed on the altar, venerated it with great devotion, then gave it to be kissed by the young Archduke of Tuscany, who had come, in the name of his family, to pay him homage.

E.

APPARITION OF THE HOLY FAMILY TO MR. DE LA DAUVERSIÈRE.

M. de la Dauversière having one day gone into the church of Notre Dame, in Paris, and having there received Holy Communion with his usual fervor,

D.

'S MARRIAGE RING.

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HE HOLY FAMILY TO MR. DE DAUVERSIÈRE.

sière having one day gone into Dame, in Paris, and having there mmunion with his usual fervor,

whilst making his thanksgiving alone near the statue of Mary, and profoundly recollected in God, was ravished out of himself, and saw distinctly the Holy Family—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. As he contemplated these august personages, he heard Our Lord say these words three times to the Most Holy Virgin: "Where can I find a faithful servant?" and saw that the Divine Mother, taking himself by the hand, presented him to her Divine Son, saying: "Behold, Lord, this faithful servant." That then Our Lord received him kindly, and said: "Thou shalt henceforth be my faithful servant. I will clothe thee with wisdom and with strength; thou shalt have thine Angel Guardian for a guide. Labor earnestly at my work; my grace is sufficient for thee, and it shall not be wanting to thee." Whereupon the Lord placed in his hand a ring engraved with the names of *Jesus, Mary, Joseph*, telling him to give such another to all the young girls who should consecrate themselves to the Holy Family, in the congregation he was going to establish.

F.

THE HOLY HOUSE.

The Holy House is placed under the dome of the basilica in which it is now inclosed. Its form is oblong, running from east to west, according to the usual direction of large churches; so that the eastern wall looks on the chancel of the church, and the western on the nave. The walls, little conformable to architectural rules, are placed without support, on ground shifting and uneven; so that any one may satisfy himself, by passing his hands through the spaces left by accidents to the walls, that they rest on no foundation.

The interior of the Holy House, now converted into a chapel, is 29 feet 8 inches long; 12 feet 8 inches wide; and 13 feet 3 inches high. On the north side, about the middle of the chapel, is seen an ancient mural door, with its deal lintel. Midway in the west wall there is a small window, with a bronze grating, surmounted, within the chapel, by a wooden cross, the same in breadth as in height. This cross, brought from Nazareth with the Holy House, bears an image of Christ, painted on a canvas which covers

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the wood. To the left of this cross, towards the angle formed by the two walls, is a little cupboard, in which are kept two small cups, believed to have been formerly used by the Holy Family; in the lower part of the eastern wall may be seen an ancient fire-place, 4 feet 3 inches high; 2 feet 4 inches wide; and 6 inches deep. This fire-place, as was usual amongst the ancients, has no vent for the smoke; it merely indicates the place for the fire, which was sometimes made in the centre of a room, the smoke escaping through a window, or some other opening, made in the upper part of the wall. Above the fire-place, a niche, placed at equal distances from the two side walls, contains the ancient statue of the Virgin, also brought from Nazareth with the Holy House, and which an ancient tradition attributes to St. Luke. This statue, of cedar wood, rudely carved, is 2 feet 8 inches, and the Infant Jesus, which it bears in its arms, is 1 foot 2 inches in height. The altar, placed at a distance of some feet from the eastern wall, leaves at the bottom an empty space, which is called the Holy Chimney, because it contains the fireplace already referred to. The ancient altar is inclosed within another; it is of stone, and was brought from Nazareth with the Holy House.

According to an ancient tradition, it was established by the Apostles themselves, who celebrated the holy mysteries upon it.

The ceiling was formerly level, and studded with little golden stars. It was replaced, in the sixteenth century, by an elegant vault, supported by a stone cornice, the sky-blue ground being divided into little squares studded with gilt stars. On the walls are seen very ancient paintings, partly effaced by time. Most of these paintings represent the Blessed Virgin and some other Saints; and there is every reason to believe that they are anterior to the date of the miraculous transportation of the Holy House, as the most ancient accounts refer to these paintings as already existing.

G.

ST. JOSEPH'S WORKSHOP.

In accordance with an ancient custom, which still exists amongst the Arabs and in great part of the East, Joseph worked at his trade in a different locality from that in which Mary lived. His workshop, where Jesus Himself wrought, was a low room, ten or twelve feet wide and as many long. (Orsini, *Life of the*

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Mother of God, ch. viii.)—The same author cites, in a note, the following passage from Father de Geramb: "This house of Joseph is an hundred and thirty, or an hundred and forty paces from that of St. Anne. The place is still pointed out as *St. Joseph's workshop*. This shop was converted into a good-sized church; the Turks destroyed a portion of it, but there remains a chapel wherein the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is daily celebrated."—Baron de Geramb's *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem*.) These details are confirmed by Mgr. Mislin (*Les Saints-Lieux*, ch. xxxvi.)

H.

THE SAVIOUR'S CRIB.

We must distinguish between the crib, properly so called (*præsepium*, as the Gospel says),—a sort of hollow cut in the solid rock of the cave,—and the holy cradle (*Santa culla*) formed of boards, made by St. Joseph, to carry the Divine Infant more conveniently into exile.

These two holy relics are generally confounded: it is necessary, therefore, to say a word concerning each.

The Crib, properly so called, in which the Saviour was laid, after His birth, on a little straw, is still preserved at Bethlehem, in the grotto of the Nativity, the primitive stable. It is a place hollowed in a part of the rock, resting now on a marble pillar which takes the place of several stones of the Crib given to certain churches. One of these stones, of a considerable size was conveyed to Rome, and is venerated, even in our own days, in the basilica of St. Mary Major, on the Esquiline; it is fitted into the altar in the crypt of the magnificent chapel of the Holy Sacrament. In this precious stone a hollow has been made, wherein is seen represented the holy Infant Jesus laid on straw, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph kneeling in the attitude of contemplation.

At Bethlehem, in order to preserve the Crib from the pious ravages of the pilgrims, it has been covered with white marble, in the form of a cradle, four feet long by two feet wide. Once a year, the Reverend Franciscan Fathers, who minister in the Church of the Nativity, take off this marble covering, and, with a brush, remove, and then distribute the little fragments that are naturally detached from it.

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le (*Santa culla*) was transported from

the Holy Land to Rome, in the year 642. It is composed of five small boards, the largest of which appears to be 2½ feet in length by 5 inches in breadth. Worn away and blackened by time, they are placed one over another and bound together by sealed ribbons, and are under sheets of crystal, in the form of a cradle, which are supported by angels. The upper part forms a little dome, wherein is seen a straw bed, on which reposes a silver statue of the Divine Jesus. The whole is placed in a beautiful and splendid reliquary, seemingly about six feet high. On the pedestal, whereon is represented the Adoration of the Magi, may be read those words of the Angel to the Shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest," &c.

This holy relic can only be seen on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, when it remains exposed at different parts of the Church. The rest of the time, the holy cradle is shut up in the superb crypt, under the high altar of the basilica, constructed at the expense of Pope Pius IX. It is of unequalled magnificence; the finest marbles, the most precious stones, are there combined. It was consecrated by His Holiness on the 17th of April, 1864.

In the crypt, under the chapel of the Blessed Sa-

crament, already mentioned, are preserved some of the swaddling-clothes wherein the Saviour was wrapped, and some of the hay on which He lay. The cloak with which St. Joseph covered Him to save Him from the cold, is venerated in the church of St. Anastasia, and the basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem has the privilege of possessing some of the hair of the holy Infant Jesus.

In the cathedral of Aix-la-Chapelle there is likewise preserved a portion of those same swaddling-clothes given by St. Helena.

I.

THE GROTTO OF THE NATIVITY.

Three convents—one Latin, one Greek, one Armenian—guard the rich treasure of Bethlehem, the precious jewel of Christendom, the grotto in which the Saviour was born, protected by a Constantinian basilica. It is reached by a descent of sixteen steps. The grotto incloses the site of the stable and the manger. It measures nearly twelve yards in length, by five in width, and three in height. It is entirely covered with marble. To the left of the staircase leading t

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the manger, on the eastern side, is a semi-circular excavation. This is where Our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

An altar, supported by two little marble pillars, rises on this spot. In the centre of a rich mosaic of jasper and porphyry, is read, engraved round a silver star, the words: *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.** A little farther down is found the place which the Crib occupied. It is known that the holy cradle has been conveyed to Rome, and is now venerated in St. Mary Major's, inclosed in a magnificent monument, of bronze, marble, and precious stones, representing the Temple of Jerusalem. In front of the Crib rises a small altar belonging to the Latins, distinct from the first, which is the property of the Greeks.

J.

ENIGMA.

In the classic days of old,
I was the name of warrior bold;
But now my name breathes only peace,
That peace whose charms can never cease;

* "Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary."

Each day to penance summon I,
And men's conscience purify;
I sweep away the frost and snow,
Beneath my feet fresh flowrets grow;
I bring back Spring, and the smile of hope,
To the poor the portals of plenty ope;
With a great Saint's honor I am allied,
My name with his is identified;
I usher in the festal time
When Christ from the dead rose in glory's prime;
It is to make hearts more glad and free
That my predecessor gives place to me.

K.

THE SEPULCHRE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AND THAT OF ST. JOSEPH.

At the foot of Mount Olivet, beyond the hill of Kedron, stands the church built on the site of the Virgin's tomb, whence her sacred body was taken up to heaven. A square place, paved with fine stones, serves as a court. The entrance is no wise remarkable, but you descend to the sanctuary by a fine flight of fifty steps, covered by a sounding arch, the echoes

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of which repeat the pious chant of the pilgrims who go down thither singing Litanies and hymns. This holy place receives no other light than that from the door, which is at the top of the steps, and a narrow opening behind the Sepulchre. This gloom inspires recollection and respect, the eye soon becomes accustomed to it, and discovers the Tomb where the Divine Mother of the Saviour triumphed over death.

"The Virgin," says Chateaubriand, "was, according to the opinion of many of the Fathers, miraculously buried at Gethsemane by the Apostles. Euthymius relates the history of these marvellous obsequies. St. Thomas having caused the coffin to be opened, nothing was found therein save a virginal robe, the poor and simple garment of the Queen of Glory, who had been carried by Angels to heaven."

Thick walls support an arch which covers the monument, and forms a small chapel, so narrow that it can only contain three or four persons at a time. This Tomb is now an altar, and Mass is celebrated on the very spot where Mary's body reposed. The monument is covered with marble, and a great number of lamps are kept burning above the altar. All Christian nations desired to have the Holy Sacrifice

offered up in the Sanctuary consecrated by the Sepul
chre of the Mother of God. Thus are fulfilled be
fore the Tomb of Mary the prophetic words of th
Magnificat: "All generations shall call me blessed.
The altar of the Greeks is placed behind the Tomb
that of the Armenians is near the western entrance
that of the Georgians is at the foot of the gran
southern staircase; that of the Copts is in the nav
itself, in front of the sepulchre. Before this alt
there is a fountain of excellent water, which the p
grims drink with devotion. The Latin Catholi
have for their altar the very Tomb of the Virgi
and it is they who keep the lamps burning before
night and day.

The Mahometans themselves would have in t
sanctuary of the Mother of Jesus, a place of pray
They hollowed a niche in the south wall, and th
turn towards it to pray.

The Emperor Theodosius is considered the f
founder of this church, which was destroyed by Ch
rocs, and rebuilt by the Crusaders. During the
ages, the ruins of Jerusalem, heaped in this part
the Valley of Jehosophat, had covered the Tomb
the Blessed Virgin.

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There it was, according to a tradition preserved by the Greeks, that Mary appeared to the disciples after they had performed the last duties to her sacred body. They had just finished the usual light repast, and were returning thanks in these words: "Glory be to Thee, O God! glory be to Thee; glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost! Oh! how great is the name of the Trinity! Lord Jesus Christ, help us!" The Virgin appeared before them, surrounded with splendor, and in the transports of their joy, they cried: "Panagia! Panagia! adjuva nos!"* The Virgin replied: "I shall be with you always."

When the pilgrims reascend the grand stairs, after having reached the twenty-second step, they stop to venerate the chapel of St. Joseph's burial-place.

"That great Saint," says Father Nau, "the cousin-german, and virginal spouse of the Queen of Virgins, the Mother of God, and nephew of St. Anne, who was the sister of his father, Jacob, and who was, furthermore, the adopted father of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and the fosterer of God Himself, had come to Jerusalem, to fulfil the obligations

* "O Holiest! Holiest! help us!"

of the law, and had the consolation of dying there in the practice of that obedience which he rendered to his Creator."

He died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, both of whom assisted at his obsequies. According to tradition, Jesus Himself laid him with His own hands in this sepulchre, which was to be so near that of His Mother.

The date of St. Joseph's death is uncertain. Some authors think that he died soon after having found Jesus in the Temple among the doctors; but this opinion is not confirmed by any text. According to another opinion, Joseph died about the beginning of Our Saviour's public ministry. The body of St. Joseph did not long remain in the sepulchre; he was amongst the Saints who went forth alive from their graves after the Resurrection of the Son of God, and who appeared to a great number of persons in Jerusalem. Father Nau makes, in this connection, a touching reflection: "Can it be thought that he who supported the Son of God by the sweat of his brow for thirty years, was left dead in his sepulchre? And if God had left him there, would he have left his sacred remains unhonored? . . . This Saint is in

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heaven, body and soul. He ascended thither at the head of all the Saints who were raised up to heaven with Jesus Christ on the day of His ascension; and, as he does not lose there the name and quality of father, he possesses a glory and a power proportionate to that great and ineffable name."

The chapel of St. Joseph is on the right hand side of the grand stairs, as one goes up the steps from the sanctuary. On the other side, in a chapel two or three steps higher, is found the Tombs of St. Joachim and St. Anne. Here, too, Mass is celebrated in the chapel right over the holy sepulchres. The tomb of St. Joachim is facing the east, and that of St. Anne the north.

Thus, in the same sanctuary, Christian piety venerates all the members of this Holy Family, amongst whom the Son of God vouchsafed to be born.

L.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE CHOSEN FOR ST. JOSEPH'S STATUE IN THE HOLY LAND.

The group of hills amongst which Nazareth stands, rises in the plain of Esdralon, having in front Ptolemais, overlooking Carmel on the left, and Cape Blanc on the right. The Cison flows at their feet. This place has been made memorable by a hundred battles. On the other side of the group are found Cana, Tiberias, and Thabor. Chef-Amar is not far from Nazareth.

Now, it was on one of these eminences that the Holy House of Joseph and Mary rested during its transportation to Loretto. A more beautiful site could not possibly be imagined whereon to raise the statue of the Holy Patriarch in whose person the Old and New Law were bound together. It will be when he shall rule in his native land, that those countries, desolated by Islamism, shall again find favor with God, and, for the Holy Land, the new era of mercy shall have replaced that of justice.

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M.

ST. JOSEPH SOLEMNLY TAKEN FOR THE FIRST PATRON OF CANADA.

In taking possession of Canada, the Associates,* rejoicing in the thought that they could consecrate themselves *entirely to God*, and knowing that the Recollet Fathers had placed themselves under the patronage of St. Joseph, sent an image *in relievo* of this holy patron, which was placed over the altar of Our Lady of Recovery, (*Notre-Dame de Recouvrance.*) But, as the adoption of St. Joseph for the first patron of Canada had not been made with all the requisite conditions, while the Calvinists were in power, it was resolved to renew it with all the solemnities required by ecclesiastical law. It was, therefore, decreed that the magistrates and people, in concert with the clergy, should ratify it in the most solemn manner; and, that nothing which might be desired should be wanting, the Sovereign Pontiff, Urban VIII., sanctioned this choice by granting a plenary indulgence on the Feast of this Holy Patron. On

* The Associates numbered one hundred; their Association, under the name of the Company of New France, had in view the formation of a French colony in Canada.

the eve of that festival, in the year 1637, the banner was raised and cannon fired, announcing the next day's solemnity; and, when night came, such brilliant fireworks were sent off as had never been seen in that country. M. Jean Bourdon, geometrician, planned and executed the architectural part, and the fireworks were the composition of Sieur de Beaulieu. To express allegorically the object of the feast, two small buildings were erected, each on a piece of wood sufficiently elevated. One represented New France, under the form of a square crenellated castle, flanked at its angles by four turrets, each surmounted by a flag, all well proportioned and variegated with divers colors.

On the roof of this castle rose a sort of crown; over that again a revolving wheel, and over all a cross, terminated, at each of its three extremities, by as many large *fleurs de lis*, which appeared ornamented with brilliants. This castle, carried on a platform, was defended at each of its four angles by so many revolving wheels, and its whole circumference by sixteen jets of fire, without speaking of four great trunks from which were to go forth and rise into the air more than two hundred snake (or serpentine)

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rockets. Near this castle, symbolical of New France, the other little edifice was carried on a piece of wood. This last was oblong; on its principal front appeared in a transparency the glorious name of St. Joseph, in large Roman letters; and from this name were to arise rockets, now perpendicular, now in arches, in the midst of a shower of stars, or of fire.

All being thus arranged, the Sieur de Montmagny, with his lieutenant, M. Delisle, and the gentlemen of their suite, came out of the fort, and placed themselves near the church where these buildings had been erected. All the inhabitants of New France who were near Quebec had gone thither to share in this public rejoicing; and, in the presence of all these people, the governor himself lit the fireworks, the sudden splendor of which amazed the savages, and particularly the Hurons.

The next day, the Feast of St. Joseph, the church was more crowded than usual, as much so as it would be on Easter Sunday, each one blessing God for having given as patron to New France the very guardian of His Divine Son, in the person of the glorious St. Joseph.

N.

DECREE OF HIS HOLINESS, PIUS IX., DECLARING ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

(Translation.)

DECREE: TO THE CITY AND THE WORLD, (URBIS ET ORBIS.)

Even as God established Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob, as governor of all Egypt, to preserve to the people the wheat necessary for their subsistence, so, at the time appointed by the Eternal to send on earth His only Son, to redeem the world, He chose another Joseph, of whom the first was a type, He made him master of his goods and of His household, He ap[illegible]nted him guardian of His chief treasures. And [illegible]seph espoused the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of wh[illegible], by the power of the Holy Ghost, was born Our Lord Jesus Christ, who deigned to be reputed by men the son of Joseph, and to be subject to him. And He whom so many kings and prophets had desired to see, Joseph not only saw, but conversed with, held Him in his arms with paternal affection, covered Him with kisses, and watched with the greatest solicitude over the maintenance of Him

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whom the faithful people were to receive as the Bread come down from heaven, and the food of eternal life.

On account of that sublime dignity which God conferred upon His faithful servant, the Church had ever paid the blessed Joseph the highest honor after the Most Holy Virgin, his spouse, praised and glorified him, and had recourse to him in her greatest afflictions. And as, in these sad times, the Church, assailed on every side, is oppressed with such calamities that the impious already persuade themselves that the time is come at last when the gates of hell shall prevail against her, the venerable bishops of the whole Catholic world have humbly besought the Sovereign Pontiff, in their name and that of the faithful confided to their care, to vouchsafe to declare St. Joseph Patron of the Catholic Church.

These prayers having been renewed more earnestly and more urgently during the holy Œcumenical Council of the Vatican, our Holy Father, Pius IX., profoundly touched by the recent deplorable events, desiring to place himself and all the faithful in a special manner under the most powerful patronage of the holy patriarch Joseph, has deigned to accede to the

wishes of the venerable bishops. Wherefore it is that he has solemnly declared St. Joseph PATRON OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, and has decreed that the feast of the Saint, the 19th of March, be henceforth observed as a Double of the first class, without an Octave, however, on account of being in Lent. He has, moreover, ordained that the Declaration made by the present decree of the Holy Congregation of Rites, be published on the day consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God, and spouse of the most chaste Joseph. Whatever ordinance to the contrary notwithstanding.

DECEMBER 8, 1870.

CONSTANTINE,
Bishop of Ostia and Velletri;
Cardinal PATRIZI,
Prefect of the Sacr. Cong. of Rites.
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